

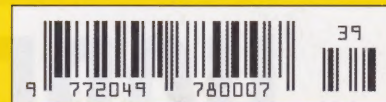
# HATE HOPE

Providing a positive  
antidote to hate  
and intolerance

June-July 2019

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## HAS NIGEL FARAGE REALIGNED BRITISH POLITICS?

A close-up portrait of Nigel Farage, looking upwards and to the left with a slight smile. He is wearing a light pink shirt and a dark tie.

### A EUROPEAN ELECTION SPECIAL



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**HATE  
HOPE  
HATE**

**An anti-fascist and  
anti-racist publication**

**June-July 2019**

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## THE WARNING SIGNS ARE HERE

WHILE THERE was a collective sigh of relief that the European elections did not provide the decisive victory for the far right across Europe, this owes more to the inflated expectations by some in the media rather than the far right actually polling badly. As our special issue of HOPE not hate clearly shows, the far right – in its broadest sense – continues to pose an ever increasing threat across the continent.

In France, Italy, Hungary and Poland the far right topped the polls. While far-right and radical-right parties did stagnate or even slip back in some other countries, such as the Netherlands and Austria, in others they did well and so that remains a cause for great concern.

Support for the Greens and liberal parties was better than expected in some parts of the continent, but the continued strong showing for the far right in relatively prosperous times should act as a warning to us all. What will come if there is a serious economic downturn or another banking crash, as some are predicting, in the next few years? The UK is certainly not immune from this. If anything, we are ahead of the game. The success of the Brexit Party is fundamentally realigning British politics, has seen the demise of yet another Conservative Prime Minister and almost guarantees that Theresa May's replacement pulls Britain out of the EU on 31 October, with or without a deal.

And let us be under no illusion that leaving the EU without a deal in October would be an absolute disaster. It will be a disaster for our industries and local communities. It will undoubtedly be accompanied by the dismantling of some of our

hard-fought rights and regulations, tax cuts for the rich and public spending cuts as the Government then desperately attempts to make the country more lucrative for international businesses.

There are some in the Labour Party who think the British public will turn on the Conservatives when this happens, thus paving the way for a Corbyn-led government. But the opposite is likely to happen. While voters might recoil at the economic impact of a hard Brexit, it is far more likely that support will surge for the Brexit Party whose populist, anti-politics and xenophobic narrative will sound ever more appealing in the absence of a political or economic alternative. Our polling makes clear that economic pessimism is already driving a strong anti-politics mood across parts of the UK. A hardening of attitudes towards the EU could well occur, whipped up by a Brexit Party and a pro-Brexit right-wing press which will be keen to divert blame from its own unrealistic positions. This could easily manifest itself in rising racism at home.

HOPE not hate has long argued against a hard/no-deal Brexit, precisely because it will adversely affect the communities that we work in, some of the most vulnerable in the UK. With such an outcome increasingly likely, either because it is actively pursued by the Government or the EU finally washes its hands of the UK, we must now redouble our efforts to oppose this.

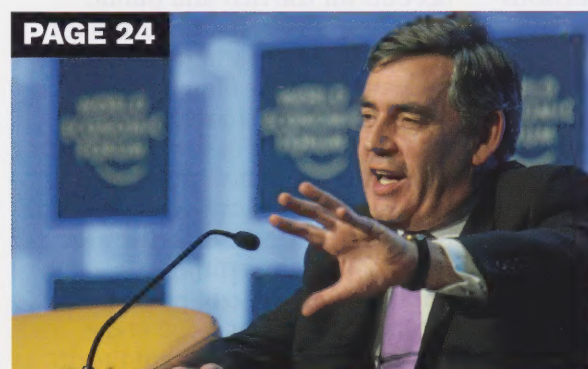
With the clock ticking, we hope we can count on your support. There really is no bigger issue facing our country today.



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**HNH uses research, education and public engagement to challenge mistrust and racism, and helps to build communities that are inclusive, celebrate shared identities and are resilient to hate.**

Initially established to counter the electoral rise of the BNP, HOPE not hate mobilises communities by providing a positive alternative to the politics of hate. HOPE not hate has over 214,000 online supporters and over 260,000 followers on Facebook. We are not aligned to any political party and will work with everyone wherever possible.

HOPE not hate comprises HOPE not hate Ltd and our charitable wing, HOPE not hate Charitable Trust.

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# EUROPEAN ELECTIONS SPECIAL

**While the European elections didn't produce the political earthquake some had predicted, many pundits were too quick to claim that the far right was a loser at these elections. It wasn't.**

**Across the continent, radical-right populist parties enjoy enormous influence and have altered the political landscape.**

**In this special edition of HOPE not hate magazine, we examine that changing landscape and the impact on both the UK and countries across Europe.**



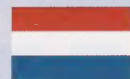
## BELGIUM

### 2019

Vlaams Belang Triple election In Flanders region it surged by 14 points to give it a nationwide share of 11.5% compared with 4.3% in 2014.  
3 Seats  
2nd place

### 2014

4.26%, 1 seat



## NETHERLANDS

### 2019

PVV  
3.5%, 0 seats  
Democracy Forum  
10.9%, 3 seats

### 2014

PVV  
13.32%, 4 seats



## UNITED KINGDOM

### 2019

Brexit Party  
31.6%  
29 seats  
1st place



## FRANCE

### 2019

National Rally  
23.3%, 22 Seats  
1st place

### 2014

National Rally  
24.9%, 24 seats  
First Place



## AUSTRIA

### 2019

FPO 17.2%  
3rd place  
down 2.5%  
3 Seats

### 2014

19.72%, 3 seats



## SLOVENIA

### 2019

4.0%, 0 seats

### 2014

4.0%, 0 seats



## SPAIN

### 2019

VOX  
6.2%, 3 seats  
5th place

### 2014

Vox  
didn't exist



## ITALY

### 2019

Lega Nord  
34.3%, 28 seats  
1st place

### 2014

Lega Nord  
6.2%, 5 seats  
4th place







## SWEDEN

**2019**  
Sweden Democrats  
15.4%, 3 seats  
3rd place

**2014**  
9.7%, 2 seats  
5th place



## CZECH REPUBLIC

**2019**  
SPD  
9.1%, 2 seats  
5th place



## POLAND

**2019**  
Law & Justice  
45.4%, 26 seats

**2014**  
Law & Justice  
31.8%, 19 seats



## SLOVAKIA

**2019**  
People's Party of Our Slovakia  
12.1%, 2 seats  
3rd place

**2014**  
1.7%, 0 seats



## HUNGARY

**2019**  
Fidesz & KDNP  
52.3%, 13 seats  
1st place

**2014**  
Fidesz & KDNP  
51.5%, 12 seats



## BULGARIA

**2019**  
Bulgarian National Movement  
7.2%, 2 seats  
4th place  
Attack – 1.1%  
NFSB – 1.2%

**2014**  
NFSB – 3.1%  
Attack – 3.0%



## CYPRUS

**2019**  
ELAM  
8.25%, 0 seats  
5th place

**2014**  
ELAM  
2.96%



## GERMANY

**2019**  
AfD  
11%, 11 seats  
4th place

**2014**  
AfD  
7.1%, 7 seats  
lost 2



## GREECE

**2019**  
Golden Dawn  
4.9%, 2 seats  
5th place

**2014**  
9.4%, 3 seats





# A realignment in British politics?

**The European election results were a stunning rejection of both main political parties, with the combined share of the vote the lowest for the two leading parties in a national election in over 100 years. By Nick Lowles**

COMING JUST TWO YEARS after the Conservatives and Labour parties polled a combined 88% of the vote in a General Election, the results represented a remarkable turnaround. Representatives of both were quick to dismiss the election results as a protest vote and normal service would return before too long.

But perhaps this is just wishful thinking and the European elections is just the latest signal that the two party system in Britain is fracturing.

HOPE not hate and Best for Britain commissioned Focal Data to conduct analysis of the combined polls of 15,231 people using a method called MRP (multilevel regression with poststratification) to estimate opinion to each constituency in the UK.

The results found that the Conservative Party would lose 181 of the seats it currently holds, mainly to the Brexit Party but also some to the Lib Dems and the SNP and a handful to Labour.

The Labour Party only falls back slightly from its current

number of seats despite a 40% drop in its 2017 vote. This is due to the concentration of support but also the splitting of the Conservative/Brexit vote.

The Brexit Party would come second, winning 135 seats, 124 off the Conservative Party and 11 off Labour.

The Liberal Democrats would win 53 seats, up from its current 11, almost all from the Conservative Party, though seven from Labour, including Cambridge, Leeds North West, Portsmouth South and Bermondsey & Southwark.

Leading Conservative MPs such as Penny Mordaunt, Amber Rudd, James Brokenshire, Gavin Williamson, Johnny Mercer and David Mundell would all lose their seats. Boris Johnson's Uxbridge and Ruislip seat and Iain Duncan Smith's Chindford and Woodford Green seat both become very marginal.

Only 48% of people who voted Conservative in 2017 now say that they would

vote Tory in a new general election: 37% would vote for the Brexit Party, while 8% would vote Lib Dem, 2% each for the Labour Party and the Greens and 1% for Change UK. So, for every one vote the Conservatives loses to remain parties, it loses three and a half votes to the Brexit Party.

Only 57% of people who voted Labour in 2017 now say that they would vote Labour in a new general election: 30% would vote for Remain parties (19% to the Lib Dems, 9% Greens and 2% for Change UK). A further 2% would support Plaid and the SNP. 10% of the 2017 Labour vote would go to the Brexit Party. So, for every one vote Labour loses to the Brexit Party, it loses slightly more than three to Remain parties.

Based on our evidence it seems virtually impossible that Labour could get a majority in Parliament with its current Brexit policy. The only way it can form a Government will be in coalition with the Liberal Democrats and/or the SNP

– and the price for such a deal will likely be a second EU referendum, a change to the voting system and/or a promise of a new independence referendum for Scotland.

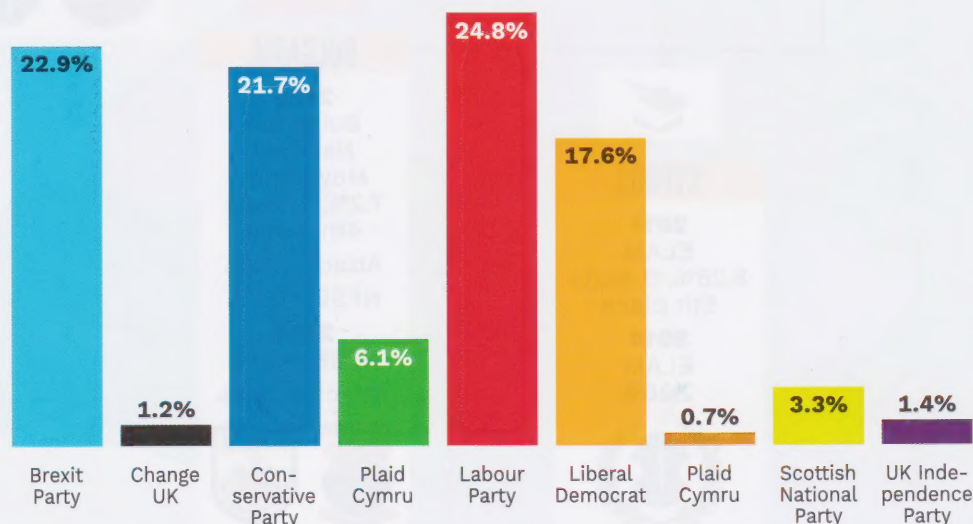
With the Conservative Party likely to choose a new leader with a more hardline position on Brexit, the chances for a soft Brexit or indeed any form of compromise with Labour looks even more remote. Our polling and modelling suggests months, if not years, of political deadlock.

## REMAIN VOTERS DESERT LABOUR

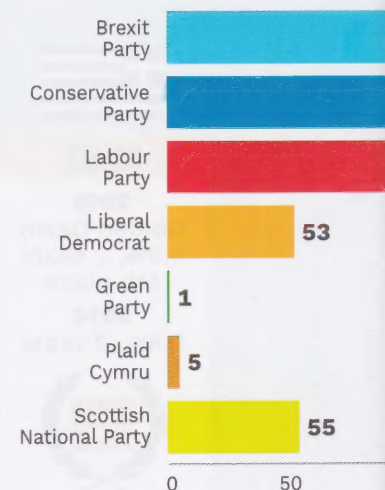
Our research found that for every one vote Labour loses to the Brexit Party, the Conservatives lose three and for every one vote the Labour Party loses to the Brexit Party, it loses 3.5 to the Lib Dems, Greens, Change UK and the nationalist parties.

The Labour Party loses several seats in strong Leave-voting areas, such as Stoke-on-Trent North, Dudley North, Crewe and Nantwich and Ashfield to the

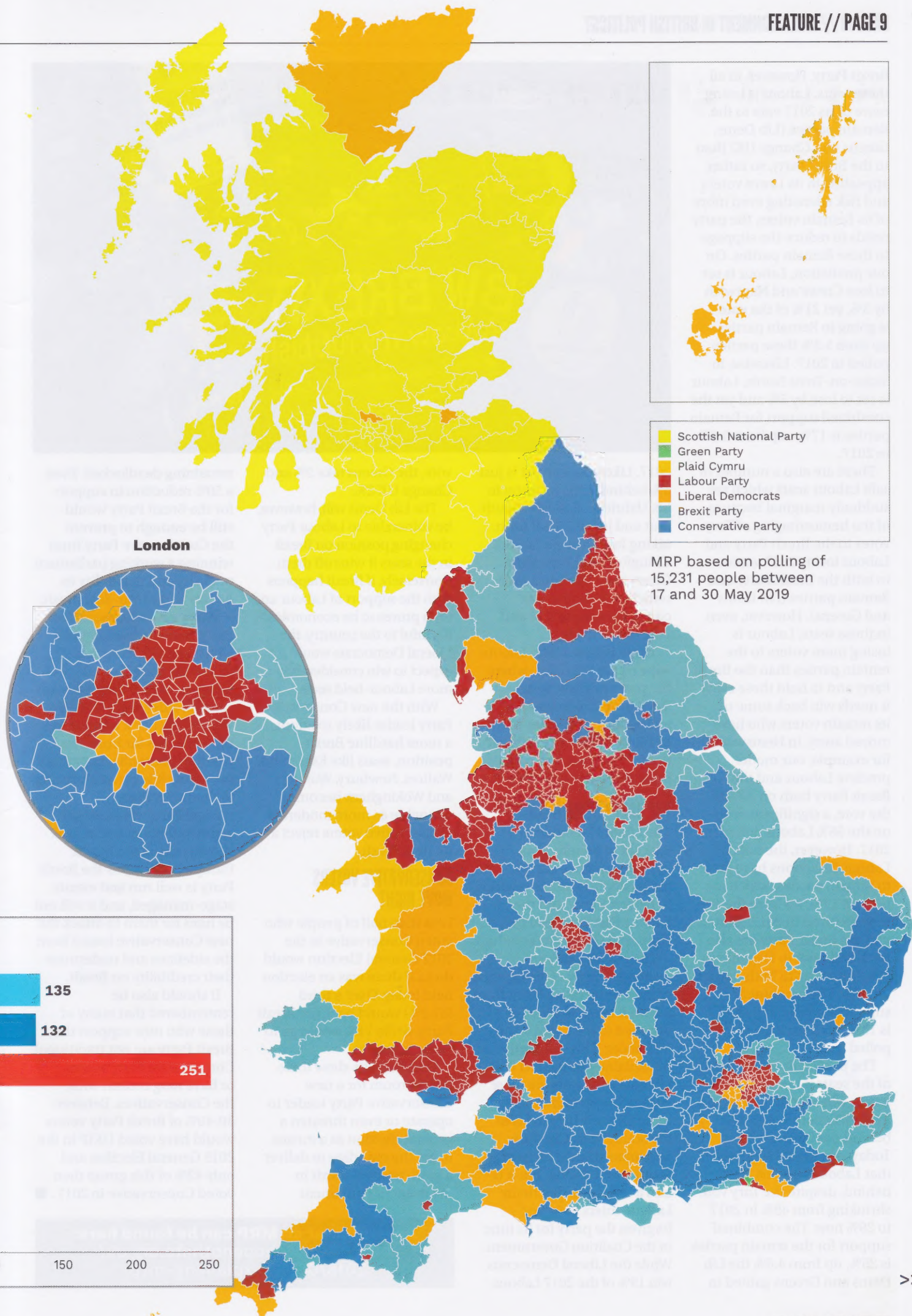
**Vote share**



**Seat breakdown**









Brexit Party. However, in all these seats, Labour is losing more of its 2017 vote to the Remain parties (Lib Dems, Greens and Change UK) than to the Brexit Party, so rather appealing to its Leave voters and risk alienating even more of its Remain voters, the party needs to reduce the slippage to these Remain parties. On our prediction, Labour is set to lose Crewe and Nantwich by 3%, yet 21% of the vote is going to Remain parties – up from 5.8% these parties polled in 2017. Likewise, in Stoke-on-Trent North, Labour is set to lose by 5% and yet the combined support for Remain parties is 17% – up from 3.8% in 2017.

There are also a number of safe Labour seats which are suddenly marginal because of the hemorrhaging of Tory votes to the Brexit Party and Labour losing 2017 voters to both the Brexit Party and Remain parties (Lib Dems and Greens). However, even in these seats, Labour is losing more voters to the remain parties than the Brexit Party and to hold these seats it needs win back some of its remain voters who have moved away. In Hemsworth, for example, our model predicts Labour and the Brexit Party both on 33% of the vote, a significant drop on the 56% Labour polled in 2017. However, the bulk of Labour defections have gone to remain parties, which are now on 17%, up from the 4% they received in 2017. Labour and the Brexit Party are also neck and neck in Dagenham & Rainham, with both parties on 31%. The combined support for remain parties is 15%, up from 2.2% they polled in 2017.

The party fails to win many of the seats it needs to win if it is to win a General Election. In 2017 Labour was 3.4% behind the Conservatives. Today, our model suggests that Labour remains 2% behind, despite the Tory vote shrinking from 49% in 2017 to 29% now. The combined support for the remain parties is 25%, up from 4.6% the Lib Dems and Greens gained in



2017. Likewise, Labour is just 3% behind Boris Johnson in his Uxbridge & Ruislip South seat and just 0.2% off from taking Iain Duncan Smith's Chingford and Woodford Green seat. The combined remain vote in the two constituencies is 23% and 26% respectively.

There is also a total Labour wipe out in Scotland, where the party not only loses the seats it holds now but nationally it would be down to 15.8% of the vote, way off the SNP's 38.9% and even behind the Conservatives.

### THE HAPPY REMAINERS

The Liberal Democrats look set to benefit from the Conservative Party's increasingly hardline position to deliver Brexit and the Labour Party's refusal to support a second referendum.

The party's gains are overwhelmingly at the expense of the Conservative Party, from whom it takes 34 seats, as opposed to the seven it wins off Labour. This can partly be explained by the fact that Liberal Democrats are more entrenched in traditionally more Conservative areas of the South West, Cheshire and more affluent areas of south west London, but it is also a reflection that many Labour voters have not forgiven the party for its time in the Coalition Government. While the Liberal Democrats win 19% of the 2017 Labour

vote, the Greens take 9% and Change UK 2%.

The Lib Dems will, however, be vulnerable to Labour Party changing position on Brexit in the seats it wins off them. Conversely, if Brexit happens with the support of Labour and then proves to be economically harmful to the country, the Liberal Democrats would expect to win considerably more Labour-held seats.

With the new Conservative Party leader likely to adopt a more hardline Brexit position, seats like Esher and Walton, Newbury, Woking and Wokingham become winnable as more moderate Conservative voters reject a no deal Brexit.

### CONSERVATIVE VOTERS MOVE RIGHT

Less than half of people who voted Conservative in the 2017 General Election would do so if there was an election held today. Over a third (37.2%) would back the Brexit Party, while 11% would go to Remain parties.

These results show there is little room for a new Conservative Party leader to operate or even threaten a general election as a means to get the mandate to deliver a hard/no-deal Brexit in the event of Parliament

remaining deadlocked. Even a 50% reduction in support for the Brexit Party would still be enough to prevent the Conservative Party from winning a working parliament majority and the ability to deliver a hard/no-deal Brexit.

While a new Conservative Party leader, especially one which publicly commits to leaving the EU on 31 October, even if they have not secured a deal with the EU, will experience a bounce in the polls, it is far from clear whether they will win back all the voters it is currently losing to the Brexit Party.

Nigel Farage is clearly an astute politician and as was shown during the recent European elections the Brexit Party is well run and events stage-managed, and it will not be hard for them to attack the new Conservative leader from the sidelines and undermine their credibility on Brexit.

It should also be remembered that many of those who now support the Brexit Party are not traditional Conservative Party voters or have long broken with the Conservatives. Between 30-40% of Brexit Party voters would have voted UKIP in the 2015 General Election and only 42% of this group then voted Conservative in 2017. ■

An explainer on MRP can be found here:  
<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2018/08/12/explaining-mrp/>



# Dangerous and Divisive

**A flash in the pan, a protest vote or a lasting major political threat?**

**Nick Lowles asks how concerned we should be by Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party.**

THE STORY of the European elections was really the story of one man and his fledgling political party. Formally launched to the media just six weeks before polling day, Nigel Farage's Brexit Party stormed to victory, winning 31% of the national vote and gaining 29 MEPs.

No other political party in any of the 28 EU countries is as well represented in the European Parliament as the Brexit Party.

More significantly though, the Brexit Party's strong showing killed off another Conservative Prime Minister and all but guaranteed that Theresa May will be replaced by someone committed to pulling the UK out of the European Union on 31 October with or without a deal. The soft Brexiteers have been totally marginalised.

The Brexit Party surge, which shows no sign of being a flash in the pan, will have a huge impact at the next General Election, which is likely to take place within the next 12 months. New polling for HOPE not hate suggests that the Brexit Party would get the second most votes in if there was a general election held today, netting it 135 seats in the House of Commons.

While it is likely to see its support drop substantially after a new Conservative leader gets elected – who will promise to pull the UK out of the European Union on 31 October – it seems as though support for the party will remain in double-figures for the foreseeable future and any backtracking on Brexit and/or following moderate policies on issues such as immigration and integration is likely to see support grow substantially again.

**So the question is, how much of a threat is Nigel Farage politically and ideologically?**

Let us be absolutely clear. Nigel Farage is not a fascist and the Brexit Party is not a fascist party. Saying otherwise is not only be factually



wrong but it will severely undermine our case against him.

Nigel Farage has always followed a *laissez faire* approach to capitalism. He opposes state intervention and strongly believes that the market should be allowed to run itself. He believes in reducing public spending and opening up public services to private competition.

In many ways he is a true Thatcherite. Indeed, he counts the former Prime Minister as his political hero and has liked to pose with a Thatcher cup.

His long-time opposition to the European Union was a natural consequence of his *laissez faire* politics. In 1993 he was one of the founders of UKIP and for the next 10 years riled against the European superstate without taking much interest in, or passing comment on, wider social or political issues.

That changed in 2013, when UKIP, then under his then-leadership, began adopting a stronger anti-immigrant tone on its Eastleigh by-election campaign. Warning against the dangers of EU expansion, UKIP campaign literature claimed that 13 million Bulgarians and Romanians

were posed to enter this country.

It was a sign of the racist and xenophobic scaremongering that was to become a hallmark of Farage's campaigning and political persona. Other inflammatory comments followed. Farage said that he would be concerned if Romanians moved in next door and during a 2015 General Election TV debate he deployed misleading statistics about foreigners with HIV.

During the same election campaign, he blamed immigrants for making him late to work, stating: "That has nothing to do with professionalism, what it does have to do with is a country in which the population is going through the roof chiefly because of open-door immigration and the fact that the M4 is not as navigable as it used to be."

He also claimed that he rarely heard English being spoken on the train he caught out of London until he got into Kent.

But it was the 2016 EU Referendum campaign where Farage's racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric was on full show. It was not just the infamous 'Breaking Point' poster, which quickly became the single most memorable image of the campaign – the general

&gt;&gt;



**Dangerous**  
**Far-right**  
**Dodgy**  
**Racist**  
**Divisive**  
**Extreme**  
**Pro-Britain**  
**Don't know**  
**Plain-speaking**

**Plain**  
**speaking**  
**Pro-Britain**  
**Leader**  
**Man of the people**  
**Truthful**  
**Don't know**  
**Strong**  
**Patriotic**

**Plain**  
**speaking**  
**Pro-Britain**  
**Man of the people**  
**Anti-establishment**  
**Racist**  
**Dangerous**  
**Truthful**  
**Extreme**  
**Strong**  
**Dodgy**  
**Far-right**  
**Anti-Brexit**  
**Don't know**  
**Leader**  
**Divisive**

**Pro-Britain**  
**Don't know**  
**Plain speaking**  
**Extreme**  
**Far-right**  
**Leader**  
**Dangerous**  
**Man of the people**  
**Truthful**  
**Anti-Brexit**  
**Anti-establishment**  
**Strong**  
**Anti-Muslim**  
**Patriotic**  
**Divisive**  
**Dodgy**  
**Racist**  
**None of the above**

HOPE not hate polling reveals the words people associate with Nigel Farage. The black chart (left) comes from the entire poll, then (top, left to right) from Labour voters, Brexit Party voters and Conservative voters.

public attack on UKIP was also clearly an attempt to detoxify himself.

To a certain extent he was successful, as the media bought the narrative and generally gave the former UKIP leader a fairly easy time during the European elections.

But let us be under no illusion that Farage has fundamentally changed or that the Brexit Party is anything other than a radical-right populist party which will both attract the xenophobic and anti-Muslim vote and is willing to use these issues when it so suits.

Even after attacking UKIP for being taken over by the far right, Nigel Farage said that there was “there is no difference” between UKIP and the Brexit Party. The Brexit Party is riddled with racists, Islamophobes and antisemites.

The party's first leader, Catherine Blaiklock resigned abruptly after being exposed by HOPE not hate after she retweeted neo-Nazi content. The party's Treasurer was sacked after being exposed over antisemitic social media posts. Recently a Brexit Party campaign coordinator was sacked after a newspaper highlighted his previous membership of the British National Party.

Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party want to present a mainstream image but time and time again, people with extreme views have found their political home in this movement.

While Nigel Farage is certainly not a fascist, he is undoubtedly dangerous and divisive and must be opposed. He has made a career out of demonising people, stirring division, and playing to people's fear. With the Brexit Party clearly here to stay, we have a huge fight on our hands. It's a fight that progressives must face up to, and win.

**Nick Lowles** is chief executive of HOPE not hate

thrust of the overall campaign depicted a Europe under attack from hordes of Muslim killers.

A lesser-known cartoon, also put out by Farage's Leave.EU campaign, was equally as repulsive as the Breaking Point poster and more revealing about its political mindset. It depicted a sailing ship, representing the EU, heading over a waterfall, while behind it a lifeboat labelled “Brexit” escaped into the sunrise with a Union Jack for its sail.

On the ship were two bearded Muslim men, one carrying a scimitar and one excitedly holding a bag of money, threatening the clearly white Europeans on board. The one with the large knife was forcing a blond man carrying a Swedish flag to walk the plank. At the front of the boat another Muslim was attempting to grope the female figurehead, pictured as frightened and covering her breasts.

A cannon on the afterdeck labelled “Diversity” also fired a hole in the bottom of its own ship, while a shark labelled “political correctness” waited to devour the Swede.

This cartoon was more than just a simple racist trope. It was, like the Breaking Point poster, a throwback to the 1930s when similar images depicting the threat of Jews were commonly used by the Nazis.

Spurred by the election of his

good friend Donald Trump, Farage moved even further to the right after the Referendum. He backed the US President's travel ban from seven predominantly Muslim countries, supported Trump's wall on the US-Mexican border and spoke of Muslims in Britain being “a faith column” in the aftermath of one of the terrorist attacks in Europe.

The day after the then-UKIP leader Paul Nuttall was heavily defeated in the Stoke Central parliamentary by-election in February 2017, Farage told Channel 4 News that UKIP had little future if it moderated its positions.

Since the 2016 Referendum he has also intensified his links with many of Europe's far-right leaders and parties, including the AfD party in Germany, a group whose leaders have engaged in vitriolic Islamophobia and anti-immigrant campaigns. It has since emerged that last year Steve Bannon, Trump's former close advisor and campaign manager, had asked Farage to front up a new far-right network across Europe.

#### DETOXIFIED?

Nigel Farage finally split from UKIP in December citing the group's adoption of anti-Islam positions and its employment of ex-English Defence League leader Stephen Lennon as proof of its move to the far right. While Farage had long disliked Lennon, his



# FARAGE'S INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS

## 1. DONALD TRUMP

Nigel Farage is a close ally of Donald Trump, standing side-by-side with the President as he has poured abuse on immigrants, hurled racist abuse at his opponents, made appalling sexist comments and cosied up to Putin.

## 2. ALTERNATIVE FOR GERMANY (AFD)

Nigel Farage has promoted the far-right AfD party in Germany, whose leaders have engaged in vitriolic Islamophobia and anti-immigrant campaigns. One AfD leader even attacked the erection of a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

## 3. MARINE LE PEN

Nigel Farage has campaigned for far right French leader Marine Le Pen, despite having previously condemned her party for "prejudice and antisemitism".

## 4. ROY MOORE

He also supported Roy Moore's Senate campaign in September 2017. Moore has been accused of sexual assault, including by one woman who claims she was 14 at the time of the alleged assault.

Farage campaigned for Moore after these allegations. During a campaign appearance in Alabama, Farage said Moore's election was "important for the whole global movement across the West that we have built up & we have fought for".

## 5. VICTOR ORBÁN

He has claimed that he "admires" Victor Orbán, saying that he is "the strongest and best leader in the whole of Europe".

## 6. STEVE BANNON

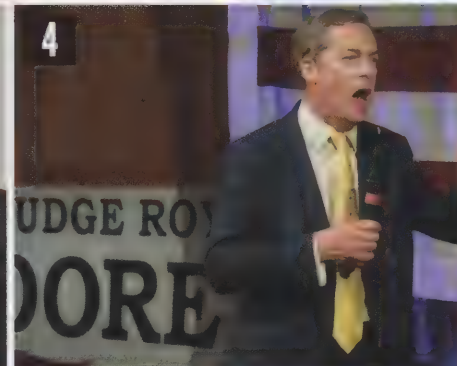
Farage is a long-time associate of Steve Bannon, former head of far-right news outlet Breitbart News Network and former strategist to Trump. Farage has even given him a portrait of Bannon dressed as Napoleon Bonaparte.

## 7. MATTEO SALVINI

While Farage has decided against joining the Europe of Nations and Freedoms, which includes Italy's far-right Lega Party, Farage has spoken admiringly of Matteo Salvini in the past.

## 8. SWEDISH DEMOCRATS

Sweden's far right and anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats were actively involved in Nigel Farage's Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group in the European Parliament.





# Tommy Robinson was humiliated in the EU elections. Here's how HOPE not hate helped do it

**One of the highlights of the European election night was a clearly stunned Tommy Robinson (real name Stephen Lennon) fleeing the count in Manchester after realising that his hope of becoming an MEP was shattered. He polled just 2.2%, taking only 39,000 votes in the north west and lost his deposit. By Nick Lowles**



Photo: @AzTheBaz/Twitter



## VOTE HOPE NOT HATE

On 23rd of May we go to the polls to vote for who we want to represent the North West in the European Parliament. Some people will be happy we have elections, others will be furious.

But whatever your thoughts on these elections, and Brexit more generally, it is vital you vote because if you do not vote then there is a real chance that Stephen Lennon – better known by street name Tommy Robinson – could get elected.

### CAUSING PROBLEMS

Tommy Robinson founded the violent English Defence League (EDL) and is Britain's leading far right extremist. He will only bring trouble to the North West – and we can't allow that to happen.

### UNFIT FOR OFFICE

But Robinson is also unfit for office. He has convictions for violence, drugs and fraud. He has been banned from every football ground in the country for fighting. He has been sent to prison for violently attacking a police officer.

The vast majority of people in the North West reject Robinson's extremism, but this means voting unless we all get out and vote. The more of us who vote, the harder it will be for Robinson to win.

For the sake of our communities – please vote on 23rd May.

## 5 REASONS WHY WE MUST VOTE TO STOP ROBINSON

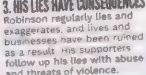
### 1. HE IS A CARPET BAGGER

Robinson lives near London. He has no connection to the North West. He's just come here to stir up trouble and divide our communities.



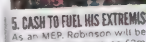
### 2. DANGEROUS EXTREMIST

Robinson is Britain's most dangerous extremist. His actions and rhetoric whip up anger and violence from his supporters and causes fear amongst local communities.



### 3. HIS LIES HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Robinson regularly lies and exaggerates, and lives and businesses have been ruined as a result. His supporters follow up his lies with abuse and threats of violence.



### 4. HE INSPIRES VIOLENCE

Garron Osborne, who drove a van into Muslims outside a London mosque, was partially radicalised by Robinson's anti-Muslim tweets.

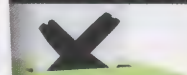


### 5. CASH TO FUEL HIS EXTREMISM

As an MEP Robinson will be entitled to as much as £2m in pay, expenses and staff costs. He will use that money to create even more division in our communities and demonise all Muslims.

**IF YOU OPPOSE WHAT TOMMY ROBINSON STANDS FOR THEN MAKE SURE YOU VOTE ON 23RD MAY**

## DO YOU THINK TOMMY ROBINSON CAN'T GET ELECTED... THINK AGAIN



### It's not too frightening to imagine, Tommy Robinson could become an MEP if enough of us vote.

Elections are being contested in Proportional Representation, so we could get elected with as little as 5% of the vote.

In a normal election this should not happen, but these are not normal times. People are angry and scared. If turnout is low then it could get elected with 300,000 votes – which out of a total of 5,400,000 is not a lot.

Why we ALL need to vote. If we don't, Robinson will need and that way he will win.

On 23rd May and let's send Robinson packing.

## JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

There are three ways you can help the campaign to stop Tommy Robinson from being elected an MEP:



### 1. VOLUNTEER.

Got to our website and follow the instructions.



### 2. SPREAD THE WORD.

Download our shareable content from our website or Facebook.



### 3. DONATE.

Our campaign desperately needs money. The more money we have, the more we can do.



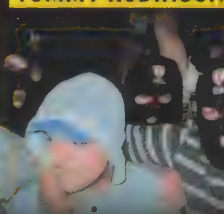
HOPE not hate is Br Rank's largest anti-racist and anti-fascist organisation.

[WWW.HOPENOTHATE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.HOPENOTHATE.ORG.UK)

## VOTE 23RD MAY

### TO STOP

## TOMMY ROBINSON



### DON'T WAKE UP ON

### 24TH MAY AND REGRET

### THAT YOU HADN'T USED

### YOUR VOTE TO STOP HIM

WHEN HE FIRST announced his candidacy, it seemed inconceivable that the man who had founded the English Defence League could become an MEP. Yet we also knew that he was the best-known far-right activist since the Second World War, and better known than most of our politicians.

Polling carried out by HOPE not hate late last year found that over half the public had heard of him, and while there was huge opposition to him, 5% of society viewed him positively. While only one in 10 of people who knew Lennon had a favourable opinion of him, almost half the population had not heard of him so it was always conceivable that some would support him. Additionally, there were a considerable number of people who had heard of Lennon but had no firm opinion of him.

All this meant that with a differential turnout where his supporters were more motivated to vote than the electorate as a whole, coupled with a good campaign that played to his strengths, Lennon was in with a shout.

As a consequence, we took his candidature seriously.

Further private polling commissioned by HOPE not hate, of 1,100 voters in the North West England EU parliamentary constituency, found support for Lennon on just 1.5%, well below the 8.5% he needed to stand a chance of winning a seat. However, we were conscious that this probably underestimated his support – not least because the typical Lennon supporter was probably less likely to be on a YouGov survey panel.

Our polling found another 3% (adjusted to 4.5%, when "don't knows" were excluded) picked him as their second preference and, in all, 6% of respondents said that they were more

likely to vote for him if they thought he had a chance of being elected.

It was these figures, combined with a concern over a low turnout, that made us think Lennon stood a small chance. The polling, however, also gave us the route to defeat him.

From the outset we decided to direct our campaign at turning out the voters who were most likely to oppose his anti-immigrant, divisive policies. We modelled the North West region where he was standing on potential voters' attitudes to Lennon and targeted our campaign to the streets where those opposed to Lennon were most likely to live.

Our polling told us who supported Lennon, it also told us who did not and, more importantly, the intensity of their opposition to him. Just as we knew that 6% would be more likely to vote for Lennon if they thought he had a chance of winning, so 38% of voters said that they would be more determined to vote to stop him if they thought he would win.

Raising the threat Lennon posed to these voters was our priority.

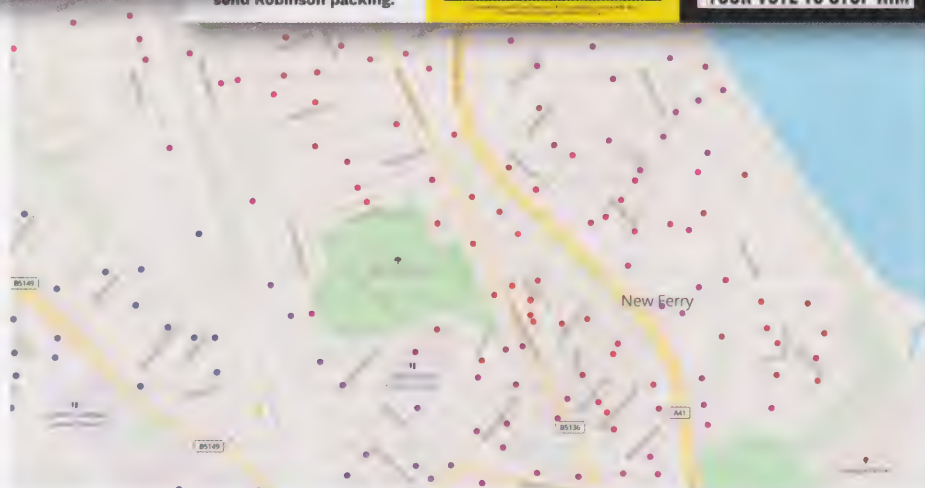
In total we identified approximately 400,000 households where we believed

strong anti-Lennon voters lived, and repeatedly engaged with them. We delivered over 360,000 leaflets to these houses and backed this up with a highly targeted social media campaign. We had different messages going to different voters, depending on what it was that we felt would move them most.

We held a big campaign weekend towards the end of the election which saw over 40 events take place in our key target areas. The take-up from our supporters was fantastic, with many new people getting involved with HOPE not hate for the first time. The support we got was even more remarkable given that to avoid confrontation or attack by Lennon's supporters these events were not even publicly advertised.

We also did not ignore the white working-class communities targeted by Lennon. In Wigan, Bury and Oldham, we distributed localised leaflets to the households that he was targeting.

In a complete reversal from our normal campaign strategy, we decided from the outset to try to keep his name out of the local media so as not to give >>



Our data told us which streets to prioritise in the election campaign





HOPE not hate held a big campaign weekend towards the end of the election which saw over 40 events take place in our key target areas

him undue publicity. We turned down request after request for quotes and stories, though we were always keen to speak to media consumed by our anti-Lennon voters.

We were helped by the shortcomings of Lennon's own campaign. He surrounded himself with people with no campaign experience – and that showed in the first fortnight, where he prioritised areas with little footfall. He had little idea who his voters were, and spent most of his time attacking the Labour Party, not understanding that his core vote had split with Labour many years ago.

Instead, he was competing with Nigel Farage's Brexit Party and UKIP, so it was a huge own goal that he did not make much of the past failure to condemn IRA violence by Claire Fox, the lead Brexit Party candidate in the North West.

His campaign was also dominated by negative media headlines of confrontation and angry clashes. Meanwhile the infamous "milkshakings" he (and others) received also sparked a viral campaign, with memes spreading like wildfire across social media.

The milkshaking was clearly enjoyed by many opposed to Lennon's extremism, including mainstream journalists and even Conservative MPs, but rather than focus on the attack as a symbol of wider mockery and disdain from the liberal elite, his team reacted in the usual manner – through violence.

Lennon's bodyguards and supporters were involved in a series of violent assaults throughout the campaign, some of which are the subject of police investigation. Two people were put in hospital after they were badly attacked in Warrington.

A student was beaten and cut in an attack in Market Street, Manchester, after Lennon stopped a group of students who were performing street dance to ask their opinion on politics. When the young man told Lennon that he didn't speak to racists and homophobes, he was set upon by Lennon's thugs.

A few days later, in Birkenhead, a Labour Party member was taken to hospital with burns after being hit by "an industrial firework" thrown by Lennon supporters.

All these incidents only reinforced the image of thuggery that surrounded Lennon, which of course was the main barrier to him getting more support.

Even after trouble broke out in Oldham, when a group of the so-called Muslim Defence League attempted to attack one of his rallies, the media narrative was one of trouble following him around and that reinforced our own message that he was just bad news.

### SOCIAL MEDIA BAN

Stephen Lennon has made much of his ban on most social media platforms, claiming that this helped prevent him winning. While clearly this deplatforming hampered Lennon's ability to get the message out, he also knew about these restrictions from the outset but did little to think of ways to get around them, largely ignoring local newspapers and radio which of course was a way to by-pass the national media and reach local people. He launched his campaign in chaotic fashion on some grass in the middle of a working-class estate in south Manchester and seemingly did little to attempt to get his message carried by the media. It was if, in his arrogance, he felt that he did not need

them – totally misunderstanding that candidates who similarly accuse the media of being part of the political elite are acutely aware that they need this very same media to convey their message.

Nigel Farage is a case in point. During the campaign, to reinforce his anti-establishment narrative, he attacked the BBC for anti-Brexit Party political bias. This from a man who has been on Question Time more than any other politician over the last six years and who is rarely out of the media spotlight.

Lennon clearly got driven by his own ego and self-importance. He clearly chose to stand in the North West because he had held a number of well-attended demonstrations there over the last two years: demonstrations where he was the centre of attention. He failed to understand that having 3,000 people hero worship him in central Manchester does not mean the rest of Manchester, or indeed the North West as a whole, had any time for him.

As it was, Lennon made the campaign all about him. He surrounded himself with people like him. His events were attended by people like him. And – by all probability – those who voted for him were like him.

It is hardly surprising that Lennon's vote was relatively small. There are some who will say that Lennon was and is a distraction from the threat posed by Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party. Of course, in wider political terms that is correct. But, for the north west, Lennon being elected would have given him a huge platform to spread his anti-immigrant poison, and that would have had severe consequences for local communities and community tensions. Fortunately, the people of the North West area roundly rejected Lennon, and for that we should all be happy.

Where he heads now we'll have to see, but it's unlikely that "Brand Tommy" will disappear just yet: after all, as well as stirring up hate, most of his "campaigning" is actually about himself and his lavish lifestyle, so he desperately needs to keep himself in the headlines.

HOPE not hate would like to thank the National Education Union and Unison for their generous support to our campaign. Without their help we would not have been able to run the campaign we did.



# HOW ONLINE CAMPAIGNING HELPED DEFEAT LENNON

**Matthew McGregor and Joe Cox**

Social media advertising – especially on Facebook – gave us a real chance to reach the people we needed to turn out: those voters we knew from polling and data wouldn't like Lennon, but who might not turn out as strongly as other voters. We designed adverts to get a simple message to them – the best way to ensure Stephen Lennon isn't your next MEP is to register, and then vote.

In the run up to the voter registration deadline we used the threat of Lennon to register almost 20,000 voters in the North West. These included students and people who had moved home within that last 12 months that we were able to identify through Facebook.

The adverts we ran included simple graphic images, stark images of Lennon's violence, and videos, all tested carefully to see which worked best. As well as being seen by the people we targeted with the ads, the content was shared and liked by thousands of people, getting to friends of our direct targets too.

All in all, our target audience saw one of our ads 2.4 million times. Alongside the rest of the campaign, the impact became clear on election night.

**HOPE not hate**  
Sponsored · Paid for by HOPE not hate ·

This election is going to be *\*incredibly\** close. If you don't vote, the North West is at risk of electing a RACIST EXTREMIST. Don't risk it — vote to STOP Tommy Robinson on 23rd May.

**THE ELECTION IS TOO CLOSE TO CALL**

159 202 Comments 508 shares 78K views

Like Comment Share

**HOPE not hate**  
Sponsored ·

LAST CHANCE to register to vote! The deadline is on Tuesday 7th May. Register now — it only takes 2 minutes.

**STOP EXTREMISTS FROM GETTING ELECTED**

**REGISTER TO VOTE**

GOV.UK  
**Register To Vote**  
Have your say in the EU election. [SIGN UP](#)

187 242 Comments 89 Shares

Like Comment Share

Google about 9 months ago  
The perfect ending to every beginning.

**HOPE not hate**  
Sponsored · Paid for by HOPE not hate ·

\*SHARE THIS\* Tommy Robinson is an EXTREME RISK to the North West. He is a racist and an extremist. Don't wake up the day after the election and regret that you didn't use your vote to stop him. Vote to #STOPTOMMY on 23rd May.

**TOMMY ROBINSON**

**IS STANDING IN YOUR AREA.**

126 206 Comments 260 shares 49K views

Like Comment Share



# The milkshake election

By Matthew Collins

THE UNITED KINGDOM Independence Party (UKIP) threw its dwindling membership open to all kinds of conspiracy theorists, rape jokers and anti-Muslim bigots into the European elections. Still, try as hard as they might, there was no place for Stephen Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, the criminal thug and founder of the English Defence League (EDL).

UKIP's leader Gerard Batten was either unable or unwilling to overturn the party constitution. All that separated UKIP from its splintered doppelganger and degenerate For Britain Movement was the rule about former members of Nazi groups like the British National Party or National Front joining his party.

Lennon was frustrated and insulted. He and Batten had orchestrated by either design or default, a dark and irreversible lurch by UKIP over the previous 12 months or so, into a gutter of noisy protests resulting in large rallies where Lennon and Batten would hug and backslap each other with wholesome platitudes about the other's brilliance and resilience.

In November 2018 Batten anointed Lennon as UKIP's 'grooming gangs advisor', affording the ever-aspirant Lennon, in his mind, a legitimate political platform from which he could reinvent himself. For the bulk of UKIP's membership, which had rejected the For Britain founder Anne Marie Waters during a leadership election a year earlier it signalled the time for a further exodus. With Brexit 'betrayed' and Britain failing to negotiate a suitable exit from Europe before the proposed date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, Britain would reluctantly be forced to hold European Parliamentary Elections in May.

Lennon saw his real pay-off as the chance to become a UKIP MEP. He was rebuffed. Lennon was on the cusp of calling it a class issue,

but somewhere that fault-ridden analysis escaped him.

As former UKIP leader Nigel Farage geared up to launch the all-conquering Brexit Party UKIP threw its hands up and became the truest and newest nasty party. Their disillusioned grooming-gangs spokesman, Lennon, took his angered self to the hushed corridors of Manchester in mid-April to play what he thought was his greatest masterstroke.

Lennon nominated to stand in the North West constituency – a European constituency that in 2009 temporarily squeezed former BNP leader Nick Griffin into its European luggage. Only two years before, thousands had marched behind Lennon chanting his name [Tommy Robinson] in 2017.

Whether Lennon was holding a gun to UKIP's head is unclear but with only a few days before nominations closed and only requiring an approximate 8% vote, there was a clear message to UKIP and Gerard Batten about Lennon's spoiling potential.

Lennon's self-appointed campaign manager, spokesman and gofer Daniel Thomas, a bungled kidnapper, told Lennon's supporters that he (Lennon) had surrounded himself with "intelligent people" and knew how to get elected. As the Lennon bandwagon limped out onto a village green in Wythenshawe just hours after the electoral nominations closed, a confirmed independent and without political ticket serving hotdogs to a smaller than anticipated group of supporters, it appeared the much vaulted intelligent people had deserted him. Handing out junk food to potential voters – "treating" – turned out to be illegal and the rain ruined barbecue had to be shut down.

Next came election leaflets without the imprint of who printed

and published the leaflet on them. Lennon's frustrations were palpable. For a start, few printers wanted their details on his leaflets.

But it was in the actuality of fighting an election where Lennon – who quite clearly fancies himself as from the Donald Trump school of thought came up even more surprisingly short than even we could have imagined.

Instead of pressing home his politics a view by converting thugs to activists in the way the BNP had in 2009, Lennon relied on a series of drunken rallies and confrontations reminiscent of his EDL days. Then there were the no-shows; late nights after playing out converting into no-shows on several planned public appearances.

Hourly updates on his campaign relayed on the encrypted social media app Telegram or on Daniel Thomas's self-promoting Twitter feed became a diet of failure and





Gerard Batten with  
Tommy Robinson

a keen promotion of a lack of professionalism.

If being lacklustre and often only armed with arguments and no policies (his election leaflet was more than scant on the issue of what he had planned for the region if elected) being hit with milkshakes twice in two days finally helped him break into the national and international media. First in Bury, then in Warrington, twice he was drenched in the stuff. However, it was only violent responses that people would see. As 'Milkshaking' spread across the country against other right-wing candidate, a near-intelligent debate opened as to whether it was proper to 'Milkshake' even the likes of Nigel Farage.

It was in Oldham where the potential for real violence almost spilled over. Lennon's travelling roadshow was followed by counter-demonstrators in Limeside, a 'white neighbourhood' where Lennon followers broadcast a series of violent skirmishes between themselves and young Muslims, many with their faces covered. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) said "objects including eggs and bricks" were thrown and there was damage to two police vehicles. While Daniel Thomas would broadcast somebody was stabbed, GMP said there were no reported injuries and rumours someone had been stabbed were false.

Paul Golding, leader of Britain First- with whom Lennon had struck up an unlikely alliance just before the elections, even broadcast he had it confirmed by the police there had been gunshots. GMP, responsibly, refused to even dignify that with a response.

Throughout the campaign Lennon would tell people, in particular those who objected to his presence in their communities, that he would be their MEP very

soon. He even claimed his not unsubstantial MEP's salary, were he elected, would be donated to charities that dealt with victims of grooming. This offer, dubious to say the least, was rejected by a coalition of 40 such charities as a "profound insult".

"We, as organisations and individuals fighting tirelessly against the abuse of women and girls, as survivors of abuse and their families, and as people who care about our communities, do not want your money, Tommy," they wrote.

In a rare interview, afforded to Lennon by ITN, he asked a number of questions about what he would really do if elected as an MEP. After trying to deflect the question, Lennon responded there was "not much" an MEP (i.e himself) could or would do if elected.

The key to Lennon's failure would lie in a complete lack of substance and a failure to campaign properly. His simple assumption was that a surgical smile, infamy and an underbelly of some minor, residual sympathy coupled with antagonising racist tensions and social media would see him scrape home.

Lennon and his campaign team's preference for a cult of sympathy and personality saw his followers

run amok after an election eve rally in Salford in scenes the *Manchester Evening News* described as "chaotic." Appearing at the rally, Lennon, increasingly deluded, was still telling people he would be elected. His polling was nearer the 2% mark than the required 8%. It appeared his intelligent people were either bereft or ignorant of the most recent polling figures.

Approaching the election count on the Sunday after the poll, the tone of Lennon's campaign became more hopeful than definite of success. A small group of Lennon followers who had spent the election campaign gawking and rioting instead of electioneering greeted his arrival outside the count. Within minutes of arriving it was made clear to Lennon that he had failed miserably. He left the count, flagging a taxi into the night.

Lennon cited and blamed HOPE not hate for his defeat. He saw his failure as a simple case of who had greater access to social media, though it was quite clear early on that Lennon could be defeated because the things he relied on; violence, antagonism, aggravation and conspiracy were not going to give him the foot up the ladder he so felt he deserved. Or an absence of campaigning. ■



# Polarised politics in the UK

**Data scientist Ian Warren attempts to decipher the 2019 European election results in the UK**

I only needed to hear two statistics to know what would happen in the European elections. First, turnout of 28% in Hartlepool. Second, turnout up 10% in Cardiff. At that point I could reliably project low turnout (and Labour troubles) across Labour's traditional heartlands and high turnout (and Lib Dem / Green success) in cities like Brighton, Cambridge, Oxford and across London. When I then saw good, but not stellar, turnout around the Wash, and on the Kent coast, I also knew this would be a good night for the Brexit Party but not perhaps at the high end of their expectations. And so it more or less proved.

## TURNOUT

When you hear people like me speak about differential turnout, we're normally talking about second-order elections. The European elections are a good example. Turnout in the United Kingdom for the European elections has been at around 35% since 2004. In this election, turnout overall was 36.9%, up just 1.5% from four years ago. However, this apparently small rise in overall turnout masks considerable differences in who or where turned out to vote. Put very simply, the Labour heartlands didn't turn out, the Brexit party didn't appear to inspire much higher turnout than UKIP in 2014, and the Lib Dems and Greens saw very large increases in the areas they needed to win.

So, for instance, there was a negative relationship

between turnout and the vote share achieved by either Labour or the Brexit Party. That is, as turnout in an area went up, their vote share went down. In Labour heartlands turnout struggled to get over 30%. In areas where UKIP performed well in 2014, the Brexit Party performed well but didn't see much of a rise in overall turnout. Lower turnout in Labour Leave and/or Brexit Party target areas effectively provided an opportunity for the Lib Dems and Greens if their vote chose to come out to vote. Which they did.

The largest turnouts, and the largest increases in turnout from 2014, came in areas which voted to Remain in 2016 and which voted for the Lib Dems or Greens in 2019. Places like Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, Brighton, Cheltenham, Cardiff, and most of London saw large increases in turnout and parallel increases in either Lib Dem or Green's vote share. Across the south east the turnout differentials benefitted the Lib Dems; in the Labour heartlands the Greens were also the beneficiaries.

In short, as in most low turnout elections, it's which vote turns out which determines the outcome. Those voters which are motivated to vote, do so. Those which aren't.....don't. The Lib Dems and Greens made differential turnout work for them at the expense of the Conservatives and Labour. The Brexit Party cannibalised the 2014 UKIP turnout and added a little on top, though in hindsight

they were less efficient in turning out their vote than they could've been.

## LABOUR

Labour saw its worst performance in any national election for over a century with just 14.1% of the vote and the loss of 10 of their MEPs. The party came second in London and third behind the Lib Dems nationwide. It's important when assessing Labour's performance to understand some of the campaign dynamics which weakened the party. First of all, the membership of the party is around 80% in favour of a second referendum, a position out of step with leadership of the party; hardly the basis for a motivated ground game. Secondly, since the last European elections in 2014 the party has gone through a process of considerable internal change as veteran operatives at all levels of the party have been replaced by less experienced but enthusiastic appointees. Whilst some claim this has brought some benefits, most notably in the sophistication of their social media campaigning, there is also something of a vacuum of experience in fighting second order elections. Thirdly, the party is led by someone in Mr Corbyn with historically low levels of approval outside of the party membership. In summary, the party had a confused and weak message, an unpopular leader and a de-motivated and inexperienced activist base. Seen in that light, one could plausibly make the

case that these elections could've been even worse for Labour. Not that they weren't catastrophic.

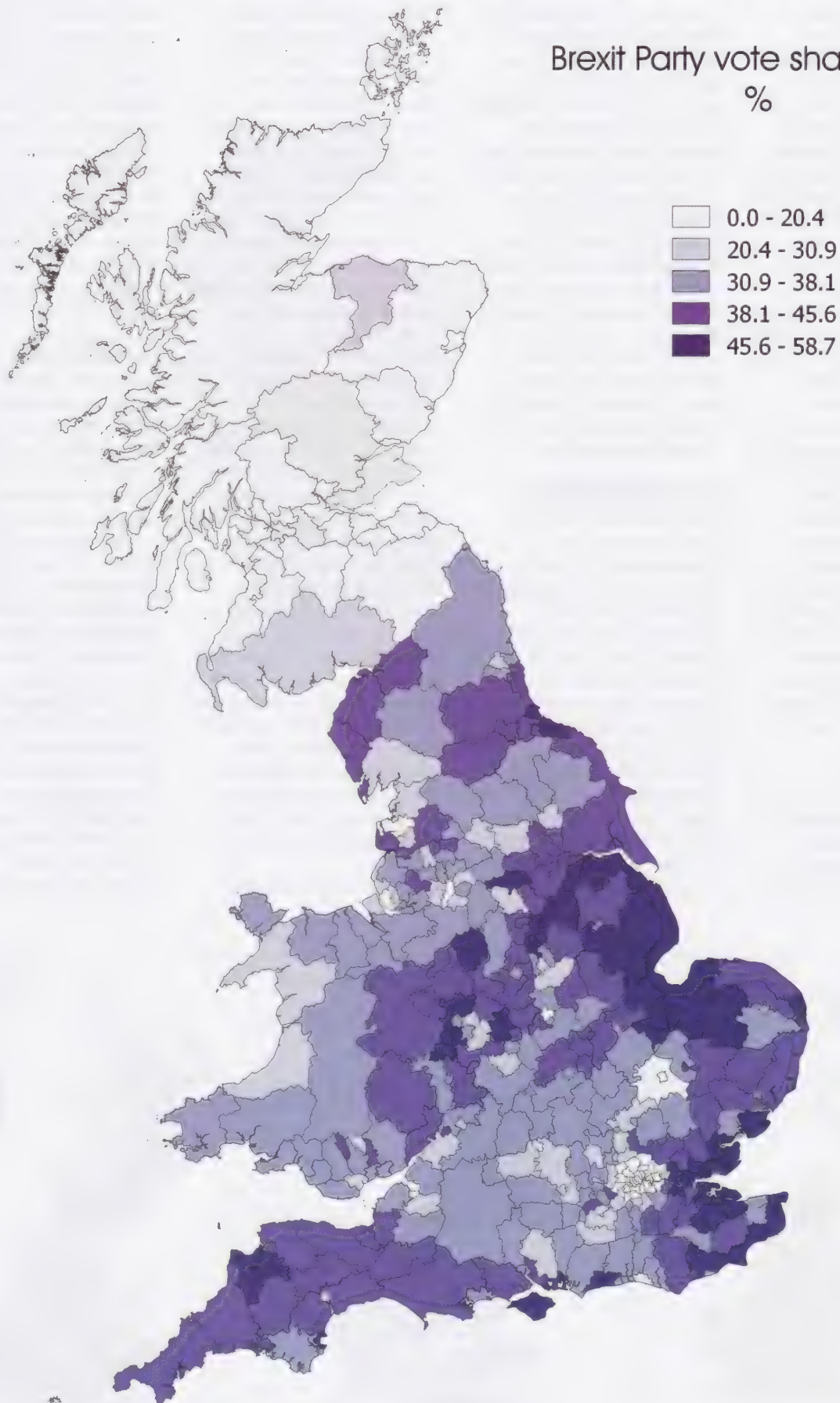
The party's sharpest falls in vote share came in London, but also in university towns and cities and areas with a mining or industrial legacy. In short, it was pulled apart by two forces: first, the voters it had gained amongst younger better-educated, urban professionals since 2014 deserted them for the Lib Dems or Greens; second, its traditional base in industrial and mining heartlands either stayed at home or swung to either the Brexit Party, Lib Dems or Greens. Ex-industrial communities like Bolsover, Doncaster, Rhondda, Redcar, and Sunderland saw both low turnout and large falls in support for the party compared to 2014. At the same time, liberal metropolitan areas like inner London, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Brighton both came out to vote and NOT for Labour.

## THE CONSERVATIVES

The Conservatives' performance was their worst in a national election since.....well, the local elections three weeks previous! Little surprise then, that for all Labour's troubles, there are some in the Conservative party who believe they face an existential crisis at present. It's not hard to see why when one looks at the results of these elections. They recorded a somewhat pathetic 9% nationally, coming fifth behind the Greens, and lost 15 of their



## European elections

Brexit Party vote share, 2019  
%

&gt;&gt;



19 MEPs. As with Labour, the party was hamstrung by a leader with historically poor favourability ratings and hours away from announcing her resignation. Like Labour, the Conservatives have seen their poll numbers plummet over the last six months. Also like Labour, they had virtually nothing to say to motivate both their traditionally loyal base and those toying with voting for the Brexit Party. Quite the opposite. Somewhat remarkably, they somehow appeared to energise their base to vote AGAINST them. I suspect that analysts within Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ) were left scratching their heads as they sent their activists to tribally loyal doors, only to have them shut in their face. I've been in that position. I know how deeply troubling it is to completely lose a grip on your own voters. Nothing appears to make sense anymore. Nobody is voting for you, and there doesn't appear to be anything you can do about it.

Like Labour, the Conservatives saw their vote ripped to pieces by two forces. First, a resurgent Liberal Democrat party continued a recent trend

in picking apart the party's vote in the south of England. There were huge swings from the Conservatives to the Lib Dems in Elmbridge, Waverley, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Hampshire, Sussex and Hertfordshire. Many such places voted to Remain in the EU, but are also stacked with demographic groups which are horrified by the populist direction of the party and/or the headlong pursuit of a No Deal given how much they value economic prudence and competence. Second, the party lost considerable vote share to the Brexit Party, particularly though not exclusively in rural or semi-rural areas and older coastal communities.

### THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

The Liberal Democrats recorded their best performance in a national election since Cleggmania, recording over 20% nationally and going from one to 16 MEPs in the process. It's too easy to dismiss this performance on the basis that they were *in the right place at the right time*. But this would be to ignore the effectiveness of their campaign. The party's use of "Bollocks To Brexit" ruthlessly positioned them as the dominant vehicle for

anti-Brexit sentiment. They presented a low-risk option for disgruntled supporters of the two main parties, even if only to *lend* their vote this one time. If they're smart, and I know there are now very smart operatives behind the scenes, the party will take the Right cue's from the campaign. Keep it simple and make it easy for voters to consume your core message.

As has been mentioned previously, the Lib Dems took considerable vote share from the Conservatives in the south east. This is now a trend, beginning as it did in 2016. There are two million Tory Remainers in the south of England. The Conservatives performed poorly relative to the rest of the country here in 2017, losing seats in Bedford, Canterbury, Croydon, Enfield, Ipswich, Peterborough, Reading, Kingston-upon-Thames and Oxford. Since then the Lib Dems have won dozens of local by-elections from the Conservatives in the south. They also took Conservative votes in this year's local elections in the south east. The European elections are further proof of long-standing Lib Dems across the south.

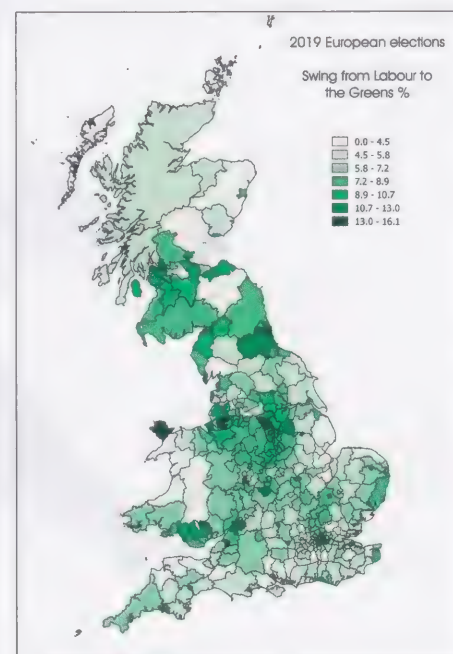
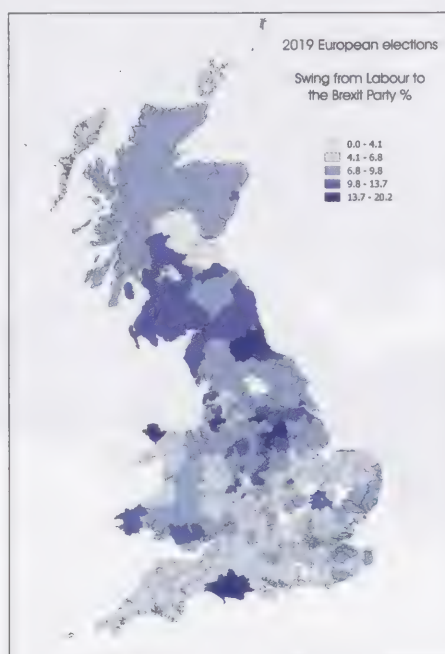
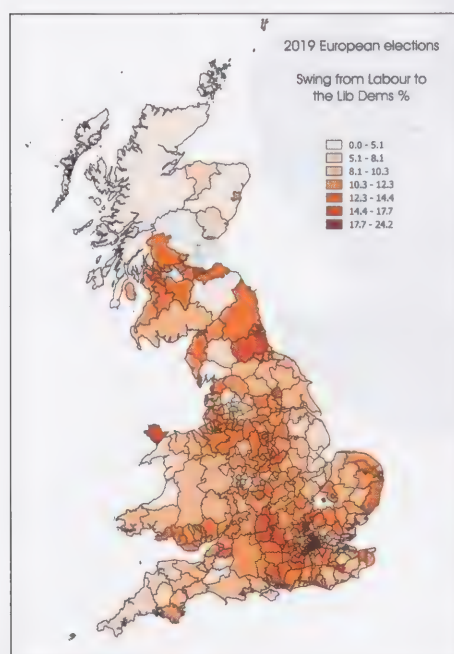
In these elections, the

Lib Dems also regained many of the voters they lost to Labour between 2015 and 2019. This was most pronounced in our cities and their peripheries; places in which Labour stacked up votes in the 2017 general election. There were huge swings from Labour to the Lib Dems in Oxford, Cambridge, inner London and Brighton for example. But also in commuter areas across the south east and around our major cities Labour saw its vote swing behind the Lib Dems.

### THE GREEN PARTY

The Green Party recorded its best performance since 1989, with 12% of the national vote and seven elected MEPs. The environment has steadily risen up the issues of importance to UK voters, although in the last nine months in particular the issue has doubled in importance (from 12% in September to 24% now). The environment now out ranks the economy, housing, education, immigration and defence in its importance to UK voters. The recent climate protests also forced the issue on to the national news agenda earlier this year.

The party's traditional





The Brexit Party was the winner on the night, with a national vote share of 32% and the election of 29 MEPs  
Photo: Twitter



base has been found in metropolitan areas and university towns and cities. That pattern continued in this election, with the party seeing its largest vote share and increases in Bristol, Brighton, Sheffield, Norwich and Cambridge for example. Inner London was also an area of strength for the party, benefitting as it did from the support of some of Labour's 2017 base. It remains to be seen whether the party can use its performance in these elections, and the increased salience of the environment, as springboards to greater success in general elections.

The party has hitherto failed to move beyond its base, although Green Party success in Europe, notably in Germany, should invoke debate within the party as to how it takes advantage of its time in the sun. Voters often need reassurance that a vote for the Green Party is not wasted, meaning it's an easier ask for voters to *lend* their support in an election like this one. It's a harder leap for voters to repeat that process in a general election.

## THE BREXIT PARTY

Clearly, the Brexit Party were the winners on the night. National vote share of 32% and the election of 29 MEPs can't be presented any other way. However, there are reasons to be somewhat cautious about the strength of their performance. They recorded a lower than expected overall vote share, and as was shown above turnout in their strongest areas was good but not exceptional. The geographical spread of their vote almost exactly mapped on to the geographical spread for UKIP in the 2014 European elections. In fact, when we use UKIP's 2014 performance as a base, we see that the Brexit Party's national share went up by just five percent.

The Brexit Party cannibalised UKIP's vote share (and added some more) from 2014 in areas like Boston, South Holland, Castle Point, Thurrock, and Thanet; areas we already knew were strong areas for UKIP. These votes were taken from the Conservatives mostly. Where the party did see further growth was in ex-industrial areas, mining

communities and seaside towns. These votes in places like Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Dudley, Hartlepool, Redcar, Sunderland, Rhondda and Ashfield were taken from Labour mostly. The party effectively took votes from Labour and the Conservatives but it would be a mistake in my view to believe that it did markedly better than UKIP in 2014. However, the worrying part for Labour and the Conservatives ought to be that they did plenty enough damage in 2014 anyway. The fact that the Brexit Party has further strengthened from an already strong 2014 base presents a significant challenge to both parties.

## OTHER PARTIES

Plaid Cymru beat Labour for the first time in a national election in Wales. Labour had previously won 38 of 39 national elections in Wales. With the Welsh Assembly elections less than two years away, Plaid will hope to build on this performance at the expense of Labour.

Change UK – which has now split – for all of its efforts, achieved just 3% of national vote share and

saw no MEPs elected.

It did best in London, which perhaps reflects how little cut through they were able to achieve outside the Westminster bubble. They now sit at just 1% in general election polling.

## SO, WHAT NEXT?

We should be careful about projecting forward from European elections to general elections. Clearly, these elections provided good results for the Brexit Party, Lib Dems and Greens and bad news for Labour and the Conservatives. In the short term, expect the polls to be extremely volatile and for the Brexit Party and Lib Dems to be the main beneficiaries. Normally, we would expect this to settle down. However, we aren't exactly in normal times. The worry for the two main parties will be that it's easier for voters to continue to vote for alternatives once they've tried it out. If that happens, we really are in uncharted waters; waters which quite possibly challenge the relevance and existence of both Labour and the Conservatives. ■



# This is a battle for the soul of our country

**Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown speaks out against Nigel Farage and the political and cultural threat he represents**

For the past three years we have talked incessantly about what kind of Brexit we should have. But the European election results have raised an even more fundamental issue: what kind of Britain are we going to be.

For centuries, we, the people of Britain, have defined ourselves as tolerant, fair-minded, outward-looking and pragmatic.

But is this honestly the kind of patriotism that Nigel Farage stands for?

Is it not now time to look behind the now well-honed – and well-funded – image of the ordinary bloke who might buy you a drink in the pub – or, more likely, talk you into buying him one – and ask what kind of Britain Farage and those he now influences is threatening us with?

There are millions of people who voted Leave because they were concerned about their jobs, the state of our towns and our manufacturing, and the poverty and inequality across the country. And there are many who last week voted for the Brexit Party out of frustration over Brexit and a belief that the political elites were out of touch. But might they not think twice about voting for this new party again if they knew the full details of the kind of nationalism

Farage espouses and come to the view that intolerance and isolationism are not an expression of their deeply-held British values but an abandonment of them?

Of course, there is no point in making broad claims and uttering dismissive phrases without looking at the facts: what we need is a close and forensic scrutiny of what we DO know about him.

He says that he – and the no deal Brexit he proposes – offers the only true and sure route to expressing our British patriotism today.

But when we dig deeper do we not find a toxic, divisive, intolerant ‘them-versus-us’ nationalism more in tune with Le Pen and Putin – and the donors who appear to finance him – than the values of the British people?

We British pride ourselves in our tolerance – but his infamous pre-referendum poster depicting almost exclusively non-white migrants threatening our borders – men and women were, in fact, crossing from Croatia to Slovenia – was no aberration that can be dismissed as a momentary episode in the heat of the moment of a bitter campaign.

Farage is on record saying he feels “awkward” sitting on a London train next to people not speaking audible English – and this instinctive

prejudice extends into many areas of our national life – from demanding local referenda for any new Muslim mosques – large mosques are ‘not necessarily a good idea’ he says – to the banning of lectureships and courses in European studies in our universities – effectively a ban on free speech – because they were, his party said, an avenue for pro-EU propaganda.

Not only are such views at odds with traditional British tolerance: they are also the opposite of what we the British call ‘fair play’. For Farage has promised:

- To undo our anti-discrimination and equality legislation just at a time when antisemitism and Islamophobia are rising.
- This at a time also when more and more appreciate why the ‘Me Too’ movement has had to be formed, undermine, gender equality laws such as a woman’s right to maternity pay.
- To replace our NHS, the best example of fairness in action, with American-style private insurance – not to give the NHS the £350m a week the pro-Brexit posters promised to ensure free universal health care but to threaten to carve up the NHS, its dismembered parts sold off to his friends in the stock exchange.

“What marks Britain out is not just that we are traditionally tolerant











Nigel Farage supports Steve Bannon at Judge Ray Moore rally

and fair-minded but that Britain's island status has made us immersed – whether as traders, explorers, missionaries, diplomats or merchant venturers – in trade and diplomatic relations with the European continent and the wider world – a British people who are, generally, outward looking engaged with the world and internationally minded.

But the Farage brand of nationalism has us glorying in isolation, viewing every institution with the word 'European' or 'global' in its title as 'the enemy' or as hostile territory.

A few days ago came the video featuring him and the Trump cheerleader, Steve Bannon, discussing, apparently with no hint of irony, a worldwide campaign against globalisation, to be waged through foreign funding of nativist movements.

Acting as if there had been no World War One or World War Two, these 'populist nationalists' simply blank out a century in which, because of conflicts starting in Europe, more than 100 million people lost their lives. Ignoring the obvious, that the European Union with NATO are the main

forces for peace in Europe, they see no difficulty in reawakening divisive nationalisms and stirring up conflicts between nations.

But it is only because they have chosen to forget the massive carnage of two world wars caused by

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***And instead of calling out a catastrophic act of economic self-harm that runs wholly counter to the national interest, 'No Deal' by 31st October has become a test of patriotism that a panicked Conservative Party is obliging their leadership candidates to pass.***  
 ”

uncontrolled European nationalism that they can even contemplate a return to it, and it is now urgent that we expose this.

There is another characteristically British way of doing things: evaluating and dealing with

challenges as they arise, a pragmatism that reflects the real world and how to get things done within it.

We know a lot about Nigel Farage's prejudices but he is very guarded about his policies – from what he would do about the housing crisis and the plight of the squeezed middle and child poverty, our industrial future and protecting our national security.

What's more, there are deeply entrenched divisions in our country today – over immigration and integration, over sovereignty, over the funding of our services – but does he raise them as issues to demonstrate an interest in bringing people together or in healing our deep divisions? No: he is far more interested in exacerbating and exploiting these divisions than in ending them.

So where does this intolerant, divisive inward-looking nationalism take us? It leads to targeting and then blaming and demonising immigrants, foreigners and anyone who stands in his way – and, of course, using language designed to induce uncertainty, fear and discord, rebutting any criticisms and countering

any arguments with the now familiar trade-mark accusations of 'betrayal'.

Nowhere is his prejudiced view of the world – and his attempt to hijack patriotism for his own ideological purposes even when what he proposes are against our national economic interest – more clearly exposed than in his claim that it is not patriotic to do anything other than leave with no deal on 31 October.

Here he is setting the terms on which the Conservatives will choose the next Prime Minister. He has deemed what is the only 'true' Brexit – a No Deal (in contrast to the referendum when a Norway deal, he said, was a Brexit option) – and imposed his arbitrary definition of true patriotism – you betray your country if you do not leave by 31 October.

“This is what Faragism has come to: to take what is fundamental to our nation – to be patriotic, to be democratic, to be clear about what sovereignty means – and to claim he is the only person who can be trusted to define what these defining characteristics involve.

**And instead of calling out a catastrophic act of**



economic self-harm that runs wholly counter to the national interest, 'No Deal' by 31<sup>st</sup> October has become a test of patriotism that a panicked Conservative Party is obliging their leadership candidates to pass.

## THE DANGERS OF A NO DEAL BREXIT

The facts of what happens with a No Deal have been set out not by me but by the Cabinet Secretary in a 14-page document. It will mean a 10% increase in the price of foods, long hold ups in components reaching our manufacturers; bail outs needed by businesses; a likely recession on the way; and the threat to public order, the Northern Ireland peace settlement and the integrity of the Union.

And the economic reality is that we have to – and want to – buy medicines, food and goods and services from other countries, and need a two-way relationship with those with whom we buy and sell (and thus trade deals) – and so any announcement in a fit of pique that we are going for a no deal can only be the prelude to a worse deal agreed from a weaker position.

But talking up No Deal means renouncing the chance of a positive post-Brexit relationship with the continent and our major economic partners: it is yet another example of an inward-looking, isolationist and dogmatic approach that has no economic logic and is an act of economic self-harm that runs counter to the British way of doing things and our long-term national interest.

So now is the time to get this harsh but necessary truth about the nature of Farage's thinking and intentions across to all of our citizens and to draw a line in the sand: to call on the tolerant, fair minded, decent, patriotic majority of British people, who include millions of Leave voters

as well as Remain voters, to speak up against the hijacking of our patriotism and this descent into the heart of darkness.

**For what is now at stake is far bigger than Brexit: it is a fight against intolerance, prejudice, xenophobia and the manufacture of division.**

But I believe that, despite last Thursday's result, the British people can be persuaded to say clearly, 'not in my name': his intolerance does not represent us; in his prejudices he does not speak for the majority. This is not Farage's country, not Farage's Britain. And I believe that when they see the facts, the vast majority of the British people will say that his intolerance and isolationism is not an expression of their deeply-held British values but a desertion of them.

And so, the new fight in Britain is not so much between those who in 2016 voted Remain and those who voted Leave – there are millions of Leave voters who will not subscribe to extremism – but between those who support Faragism as against the tolerant, patriotic majority who will not in my view remain silent.

**Make no mistake, we are now in a battle for the soul of Britain – with two views of our future competing against each other. And this is a struggle that will not be won in a day or a week.**

Winning this battle will take time and its outcome cannot be predicted with certainty – but I know one thing for sure: we will never reunite as a nation unless we walk away from such intolerant nationalism.

To the next Prime Minister – and indeed to all candidates for the Tory leadership – I say you have a fundamental choice: to run against him or race to the bottom with him. For when it comes to this toxic them-versus-us nationalism, no Prime Minister, indeed no candidate for such

**“  
Make no mistake, we are now in a battle for the soul of Britain – with two views of our future competing against each other. And this is a struggle that will not be won in a day or a week.  
”**

a national office, can be permitted to equivocate on what is unequivocally wrong.

What is the way forward? For three years, the government have said we have to resolve the narrower issue of Brexit before we could resolve the broader issue of the future of Britain. They said that we had to agree the details of withdrawal before we could tackle all the problems that led to it.

They said we had to negotiate the act of departure before we could even think about Britain's future relationship with Europe.

But the opposite is true: we cannot be clear on what kind of Brexit we want until we are clear on what kind of Britain we want.

There can be no stable agreement on a European exit without first agreeing what kind of long-term relationship we favour with Europe and the world and, to achieve that, we have to decide what kind of Britain we want to be.

And in my view it is only by reminding ourselves of our shared history as an outward-looking and tolerant, fair-minded people that we can rediscover our national unity and move forward again with sufficient strength to meet and master the challenges ahead.

Even I now harbour the hope that the British people will think again about what Brexit really means

and what we need to do differently.

And the road to defeating Brexit starts with clarity about what kind of Britain we are seeking to build.

First – and immediately – all parties need to stop the pretence that no deal is anything other than a bad deal and be honest that it can only be the prelude to a worse deal.

Next: if we are to restore trust which Farage is so busy undermining, we have to show we can address the very real problems that led people to vote Brexit in the first place – and I, and no doubt many others, have very specific proposals on how we can manage migration, protect British sovereignty, deal with the low pay economy, resuscitate our towns and regions and develop modern manufacturing strength.

But third, and perhaps even more important, we have – even now, at this stage – to take the debate outside the Westminster bubble and beyond a deadlocked parliament and bring the British people back in to our confidence by listening to them – through region by region public hearings – what in Ireland were called citizens' assemblies – where we encourage a honest debate on all the specific options for our future to see if we can build a new consensus across our country in advance of a final vote by the British people.

It is a recognition of the brutal truth: that if we do not find a way to bring the British people together, our union of four nations is at risk of falling apart.

But if we engage with each other we will, I believe, find the British people are far more tolerant, fair minded and less inward looking and less dogmatic than those who have hijacked patriotism, turned it into petty nationalism and today dominate our politics with such disastrous results. ■



# From the gutter to the sewer

## UKIP's electoral and moral decline

**UKIP suffered a humiliating defeat at the European Elections, receiving just 3.6% of the vote. The party gambled on extreme politics and lost big. Where does it go from here?**

**By David Lawrence**

IN THREE YEARS since the EU Referendum, UKIP has been in an electoral freefall and prolonged existential crisis, scrambling for votes and a sense of identity after Nigel Farage resigned as leader and eventually abandoned the party at the end of 2018.

Predictably, the party's fortunes have continued to worsen during the European elections, with UKIP failing dismally to capitalise on ostensibly ideal political conditions. The two-party domination of the political landscape that emerged in 2017 has collapsed, but it is Farage's newly formed Brexit Party that is reaping the rewards, garnering 29 MEPs to become the single biggest party in the European Parliament.

UKIP, which won the EU elections in 2014, managed just a tenth of the Brexit Party's vote and lost all three of its remaining MEPs, including leader Gerard Batten, who has since told supporters that the results were "a failure for UKIP and a bitter disappointment."

The party's founding mission – that of ensuring the UK's exit from the EU – is now being championed far more effectively by a successor party. This again poses the question of what UKIP's purpose is, and with yet another leadership election on the horizon, of where the party will go from here.

### THE CAMPAIGN

Batten took the reins of UKIP during a period of severe crisis in February of last year, and has steered the party deeper into far-right, anti-Muslim territory. This shift reflects Batten's personal politics – he is a veteran anti-Muslim activist – but was also borne of a desperate bid to stem the exodus of the party membership. Crucially, Batten has appealed directly to hooligan-led street movements, he has welcomed into his party a set of extreme online figures with large social

media followings, and he has sought to establish an alliance with anti-Muslim extremist Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson).

Throughout 2018, Batten and a number of prominent UKIP figures played active roles in street demonstrations, which were significant in bringing together far-right activists who have made their names online, on to the streets, and in electoral politics under an anti-Muslim, pro-Lennon and pro-'free speech' agenda. Some of these rallies were marred by violence.

Unsurprisingly, Batten's short-term solutions have had major ongoing ramifications for his party. According to Batten, UKIP's membership has swelled to roughly 30,000 from a low of about 18,000 in early 2018, but the change of direction has proved enormously divisive within the party, with numerous major figures (including all but three MEPs) resigning over Batten's relationship with Lennon as a close advisor.

Many of the party's regional organisers in its former strongholds also deserted the party, and UKIP's new recruits have proved too inexperienced, incompetent or uncommitted to effectively campaign on the ground.

Batten's support of Lennon has predictably backfired. Despite being widely known, our polling has shown that Lennon is overwhelmingly viewed negatively across the UK, including by a significant number of people who voted UKIP in previous elections.

The relationship soured when Lennon was barred from joining UKIP by the party's NEC (despite Batten's support for his membership), with Lennon deciding to run as an independent candidate in the north west. Batten's cheerleading for Lennon cost the party enormously, and ultimately did not even reap the support of many of Lennon's followers.

Another crucial misstep was the

appointment of YouTuber Carl Benjamin (aka Sargon of Akkad) as the second-ranked candidate for the south west region. Benjamin is a misogynist online antagonist who describes himself as a "classical liberal". Among his numerous scandals is claiming "he wouldn't even rape" Labour MP Jess Phillips (speaking again about raping her during the campaign), discussing lowering the age of consent, and repeated, unapologetic use of racist hate speech, including the N-word.

Benjamin's scandals dominated UKIP's press coverage, especially after he reacted with a childish hostility to media questions at the party's shambolic election campaign launch. Batten's repeated failure to condemn Benjamin's comments prompted further resignations and meant that the party's positions on Brexit were near-completely sidelined by the media.

Batten failed to realise that YouTube viewing figures do not necessarily translate into votes – for one, large sections of Benjamin's following is not based in the UK – and that Benjamin's wilfully offensive politics are obviously repellent to most voters. In the south west UKIP received just 3.2% of the vote, a drop of 29.1% from 2014.

### BREXIT PARTY

UKIP's rightward trajectory has only aided the Brexit Party in almost completely swallowing the 2014 UKIP vote. By consciously disowning his former party and slamming Lennon and Benjamin, Farage has positioned himself as a more moderate figure and shaken off much of his former party's toxic baggage, enabling him to recruit a number of well-known candidates from numerous political traditions around a one-issue campaign with effective branding. This is despite the fact that Farage himself has long had close associations to people and organisations – Steve Bannon, Raheem Kassam and Breitbart News Network, for example – with politics close to Batten's. The momentum of the party has also meant that its scandals – for example its founder and former leader, Catherine Blaiklock, being exposed as having made numerous racist statements – have failed to stick.





MEP candidate for East of England, Elizabeth Jones on the campaign trail! Photo: Twitter

## THE LEADERSHIP

As the results rolled in, UKIP issued a statement simply saying “It’s been a bad night for UKIP but a good night for the country. It’s time for reflection and planning and figuring out how we can all best serve our country”, leading some to speculate that the party might fold. Whilst it is unlikely to completely disintegrate, it is hard to foresee a viable route for the revival of the party’s fortunes.

Batten had, prior to the elections, announced his intention to stand down to enable a leadership election in June. Former deputy leader and (now former) MEP Mike Hookem has thrown his hat into the ring, criticising Batten for moving the party “into the fringes of British politics”. Devoid of charisma, Hookem’s sole source of public recognition is his participation in a fight in the European Parliament that left then-fellow UKIP MEP Steven Woolfe hospitalised (he has denied punching Woolfe).

Taking UKIP back to a more

“moderate” position looks sure to alienate its new members, and those who have stuck with the party, who are animated by its current hard-line positions, and are really all the party has left at this stage. By appealing to this bloc, if Batten chose to run again, he may well succeed regardless of his disaster at the polls (although the commitment of these new recruits, especially after the split with Lennon, is questionable).

## A FUTURE ONLINE?

There are also concentrated attempts from within to transform UKIP into a participant in the online culture wars as much as an electoral threat. Benjamin’s contributions to UKIP’s YouTube channel on subjects such as trans rights has helped it become the most subscribed-to YouTube channel of any political party in the UK, and its main social media accounts are making nods towards meme culture (for example, tweeting about the “Subscribe to PewDiePie” campaign).

With the exodus of a significant section of UKIP’s traditional base, there has been an influx of younger, more radical activists, coinciding with the growth of far-right media sites, such as Politicalite and Unity News, that are strongly in favour of an anti-PC, pro-‘free speech’ positions and American-style, antagonistic online politics.

A key figure in this shift is Benjamin, for whom Brexit is a side-issue. He has released gloating videos claiming that he never believed the party stood a viable chance in the election, and that “Had I not been a member of UKIP, I would have voted for [the Brexit Party] myself”.

In a video entitled “The Twenty Year Plan”, Benjamin claims that “a little creative destruction has to occur for something new to rise out of the ashes”, and that “UKIP is going to end up becoming a kind of revolutionary youth party for classical liberalism [...] now we set the groundwork”.

The support base for Benjamin and Mark Meechan (AKA Count Dankula), another minor right-wing YouTube star and MEP candidate, may be relatively small but is overrepresented in the party’s troublesome youth wing, Young Independence, and of course has an amplified presence online.

Benjamin has announced his intention to continue his campaign strategy of holding public debates, online, on controversial subjects, intending to capture media attention as well as provoke, and subsequently exploit, physical attacks from antifascists. As Farage “owns” the issue of Brexit, Benjamin is keen on “domesticating” controversial right-wing issues; “No one can talk about them but UKIP’s going to, and UKIP’s going to own these conversations”. Benjamin may well be overstating his own importance, but it is true that he has become the “face” of the new UKIP to many, whether the majority of the party membership like it or not.

In some senses Benjamin is right – Farage has co-opted UKIP’s populist, anti-EU thrust, leaving the party with little but the worst of its antagonistic anti-Muslim, anti-feminist tendencies, to which it can only really continue to play from here. It is worth noting that the party still received 554,400 votes in the European election. Whilst this figure must be considered a failure, and is undoubtedly inflated given the circumstances of the election, it is enough to keep the party limping on for the time being, as it continues to attempt to exploit fears and play to online audiences, and spirals further towards the electoral fringes.



# No "Normal" Election

## Europe's dangerous direction

**Many are relieved at the far right's showing in the EU elections – they shouldn't be**  
**By Joe Mulhall**

"FAR-RIGHT 'surge' ends in a ripple" declared *The Guardian*; "Populists fall short of expectations" said *The Economist*; "Europe's Populist Storm Rattles the Windows of the E.U. But Fails to Move the Foundations" according to *TIME*. With the votes now all counted and the results in across Europe, one can almost hear a collective sigh of relief. "They" didn't win. "They" haven't completely taken over.

The problem is that many commentators are judging these results against short-term, often-apocalyptic, headline-grabbing predictions. Before polling day there were a raft of articles about the imminent conquering of Europe by the far right, often with the spectre of Steve Bannon looming large. The result is that anything short of a massive victory across the board by the far right was always going to be seen as a good result by some.

However, the fact that the far right grew less than some expected doesn't hide the fact that they still grew, albeit unevenly, and when placed in a historical context these results remain extremely worrying. They continue to show a direction of travel for the continent that should engender concern, not relief, and the fact that they haven't is a marker of the normalisation of the far right, perhaps even outrage or fear fatigue.

### BIG WINNERS

The most worrying results came in France, Italy, Hungary and Poland where Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN), Matteo Salvini's Lega (LN), Viktor Orbán's Fidesz and Jaroslaw Kaczyński's Law and Justice (PiS) each came first.

Though a fraction down on their 2014 result, RN's 23.31% gives them

a huge 22 seats in the European parliament while Lega in Italy saw a quite remarkable rise to a very concerning 34.33%, giving them 28 seats.

Poland and Hungary were the canaries in the coal mine and continue to be at the forefront of the problem with Law and Justice receiving a huge 45.38% of the vote after running an ugly anti-LGBT campaign. Fidesz, in coalition with the Christian Democratic People's Party, gained 13 seats with 52.33% of the vote.

Sadly, none of these results came as a surprise but that should not mean they are not shocking. Just 10 years ago, at the 2009 elections, the Front National received just 6.34%, and while the party has undergone dramatic changes – some would say modernisation and moderation – in this period, the rise of party since is still meteoric. The same goes for Lega who received just 6.15% of the vote back in 2014 in comparison to their 34.33% in 2019.

Another big winner was Vlaams Belang in Belgium, which surged by 14 points in the Flanders region of the country to give them a nationwide share of 11.5% (three seats) compared with just 4.3% in 2014. They also came second in the national vote for the federal parliament which happened simultaneously. A telling sign of the party's normalisation came just days after the elections when Belgium's King Philippe held an official meeting at the Royal Palace with the party's leader Tom van Grieken, the first meeting between the monarchy and the far right since 1936.

### MODERATE BUT WORRYING GROWTH

One far-right populist party that did worse than predicted was the AfD in Germany which came fourth with

11% of the vote. This is slightly down on the nearly 13% they received at the September 2017 general election and a touch down on pre-election polls. However, this result still hands the party 11 MEPs and is a significant rise from the 7.1% they received in the 2014 European elections.

One important thing that has been overlooked is that the AfD that stood in this election is notably more extreme than the party that contested the 2014 elections and has continued to creep rightwards since 2017. They also received 11% despite a sizable campaign financing scandal hitting them earlier in the year.

There was also far-right growth in Spain, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Cyprus.

Spain saw the far-right party Vox contest it's second European elections in the wake of an impressive showing at the recent general election, where their 10.26% share of the vote resulted in them entering the Congress of Deputies for the first time with 24 seats. At the European elections they fared less well picking up just 6.2%, though this was significantly up on the 1.6% they received back in 2014.

In Slovakia we find The People's Party, led by Marian Kotleba, a far-right party with an anti-Roma and anti-immigrant politics that has caused many to describe them as extreme right and fascist. In April this year the Slovakian Supreme Court explored dissolving the party for having fascist tendencies and thus violating the constitution though the motion was eventually rejected. Despite this, they achieved their best electoral showing with 12.07% of the vote, placing them in third position and giving them two MEPs.



## ITALY

ALL EYES were on Italy in the European elections given the rise and rise of the country's far-right Lega party in recent years and the efforts of its Federal Secretary (and Italy's Deputy Prime Minister) Matteo Salvini to unite the continent's wider far right. Lega came out far ahead, winning a huge 28 seats up from five in 2014, followed by the social democratic Partito Democratico (19 seats) and Lega's government coalition partner, Five Star Movement (M5S), who gained just 14 seats.

The result has important implications for both the European Parliament and the future of Italian politics. Nationally, the results may embolden Lega to trigger a general election, leading very likely to a senior position in a coalition that could potentially see M5S ousted and a wider coalition with other right-wing parties emerge. Salvini has stated that he is willing to keep the coalition going, but he wishes to see more support for his economic programme, and an end to the infighting between the two parties (and inside M5S). Beyond this, changes to the coalition could be halted by a need for the government to respond to the European Commission's increased pressure on the country over its mounting debt.

Irrespective of national politics, Lega has a sure footing in Brussels and Salvini's plans to build a new parliamentary group will be emboldened. The group looks set to contain, at the time of writing, France's Rassemblement National, Germany's Alternative for Germany, Austria's Freedom Party, the Finns Party, the Danish People's Party and Estonia's EKRE party. This would create an alliance with 73 seats, making it the fourth-largest bloc. Such a grouping by itself is cause for concern, though Salvini has attempted to go further and bring on board Nigel Farage's new Brexit Party, Hungary's Fidesz and Poland's Law and Justice. Farage has now rejected that option.





Also worrying was the National Alliance in Latvia, an alliance between the right-wing LNNK and the far-right nationalist All for Latvia! Party, which performed significantly better than some pre-election polls predicted, receiving 16.4% of the vote and thus two MEPs. Its neighbouring Baltic state Estonia also saw slight gains. The Conservative People's Party of Estonia, along with its alt-right linked and seriously extreme youth wing, Blue Awakening, had already had a good 2019, managing the largest gains during the parliamentary elections in March, increasing their seat count by 12, taking them to a total of 19. They also picked up one MEP in these elections with 12.7% of the vote, a serious jump from the 4% they managed last time around.

Just across the Gulf of Finland the Finns Party came fourth receiving two MEPs for their 13.8%, a slight rise from the 12.9% they received in 2014. While only a tiny increase it comes after several years of serious turmoil for the party, including a damaging 2017 split that saw them lose over half of their domestic MPs.

In the Czech Republic, Tomio Okamura's anti-immigrant Freedom and Direct Democracy Party finished in fourth place with 9.14% of the vote, gaining them two MEPs. While this is one short of the fourth-place finish they achieved in the 2017 parliamentary elections, gaining them 22 seats in the Czech Chamber of Deputies, it is better than they were polling pre-election and it is worth remembering that the party only launched back in 2015.

Meanwhile in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats, who often under perform in European elections, saw significant gains rising to 15.3% from just 9.67% back in 2014 which will see them add an extra MEP, bringing their total to three.

### NOT ALL WINNERS

While the far right made gains across large parts of Europe it was by no means uniform with some notable cases where they experienced decline.

In Austria, a country gripped by an enormous political scandal that caused the recent collapse of their coalition government, it seems the Freedom Party emerged relatively unscathed, dropping just a fraction from 19.72% in 2014 to 17.2%, meaning they lost no seats.

Amongst the big losers were the far-right Danish People's Party which had a very bad night, losing nearly two-thirds of their votes and three MEPs. They managed to muster just 10.7%



this time around, compared with 2014 when they received 26.6%. However, it's worth remembering here that the Danish Social Democrats have, in part, pulled the rug from under the Danish People's Party with a very hardline immigration policy.

Also making headlines due to big losses was Geert Wilders Freedom Party which lost four seats and received a dismal 3.5% of the vote, down from 13.32% in 2014, and finishing behind the Party for the Animals. That said, when the UK leaves the EU and our seats are reallocated the Freedom Party will once again have an MEP. However, this significant defeat came against a backdrop of the rise of Thierry Baudet's new nationalist Forum for Democracy which received three seats.

Greece's Golden Dawn, once the great hope of the European extreme right, also had a bad showing, dropping down to just 4.86% of the vote and thus losing one of their MEPs. This is further evidence that while much of the far right is growing,

the most extreme end, besmirched by Nazism, still has extremely little electoral potential in Europe. This was also borne out in Poland where the far-right governing party romped home but an extreme-right coalition failed to reach the 5% threshold required.

Meanwhile, in Lithuania the difficult to define Order and Justice Party, described by some as right-wing populist, lost both its MEPs and received just 2.74% of the vote.

### SOME GOOD NEWS

The point here is not to repeat the apocalyptic protestations of some commentators before the election. While there was some very bad news for those worried about the far right in Europe, there was also plenty of good news for progressives. There were positive steps made by the Greens in both France and Germany, the Labour Party was a big winner in the Netherlands and socialists won most seats in Portugal and Spain.

However, these do not negate the



# Changing alliances in the European Parliament

ALLIANCES in the European Parliament are being shaken-up. The two main groups, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the conservative European People's Party (EPP) are smaller than ever before while some more recently formed groups have grown and some risk disappearing completely. The Greens have grown significantly, more than tripling their number of seats while European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), which counts the UK Conservatives, Polish Law and Justice and the Sweden Democrats as members, has shrunk significantly.

However, it's Italy's Lega's party and proposed new alliance with other far-right parties from across Europe and intent to form a new political group that has gotten most attention during the election. Party leader Matteo Salvini headed their first joint rally in Milan in May where 12 parties came together around an anti-immigrant, nativist and eurosceptic message. Salvini's alliance looks to become the fourth largest group with 73 seats, if it retains its current members. It's not a significant force on its own but represents a shifting balance away from the main party groups and a more fractured parliament.

One of two smaller anti-immigrant groups in the Parliament, the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) was formed in 2009. UKIP and Lega have until recently been the largest members but UKIP has now lost all of its seats and Lega is starting its own alliance and taking several of the other members with it – making it look like the EFD is not certain to be around in the next Parliament.

Farage's Brexit Party is already larger than UKIP ever was and Farage has expressed that he would prefer that the Brexit Party join EFD. However, that the UK is currently set to leave the Union by the end of October means that other parties are reluctant to base their work for the coming four years on an alliance with The Brexit Party.

Another possibility was that



Lega's Party leader Matteo Salvini

The Brexit Party would have joined Salvini's group. It would have given the alliance 102 seats until the UK leaves and would have made the new group come in just short of the third largest grouping Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group. In late May, Farage met with members of his old group but also a prominent MEP of Lega in Brussels who was willing to make The Brexit Party part of Salvini's alliance. However, Farage was reluctant to associate with the group because of its relatively extreme members, including Rassemblement National because of the party's antisemitic history.

Other important far-right parties include Hungary's Fiedez as well as Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) which currently look to remain in their respective EPP and ECR groupings. Orbán has closed the door to work with Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National and aims to stay in his current group despite internal conflicts and threats of expulsion. PiS has like Farage and Orbán has closed the door to working with Salvini's alliance because of the inclusion of Rassemblement National and the group's stance on Russia. The result is that we'll continue to see far-right parties spread out across several groups in the European Parliament but with a centre in Salvini's new group. ■

gains made by the far right. Many of the results achieved by far-right parties in this election would have been inconceivable and terrifying a decade ago. The fact that many have greeted these results with relief shows how the far right has increasingly seeped into the wallpaper of Europe. It has become normal to see them grow, normal to see them in parliaments and on TV and normal to see them fill the streets. Now it seems it is "normal" to see them come first in elections in huge European countries.

The far right won in four countries, including France and Italy, and the reaction has largely been, "it could have been worse". Their failure to have a single seismic breakthrough that rapidly and fundamentally alters the European landscape in one go does not mean their continual incremental growth should not cause serious alarm. The danger is that every election "could have been worse" until one day, it couldn't. This is not normal, and we need to remember that. ■



# CHANGE FROM WITHIN

## far-right parties shift position

By Patrik Hermansson

AFTER THE BREXIT referendum in 2016 many far-right parties across Europe hoped their country would follow suit and leave the EU. In her response to the results of the referendum in 2016 leader of Rassemblement National (RN) (then Front National), Marine Le Pen announced: "The U.K. has just initiated a movement that will not stop".

Geert Wilders, of the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, minimised the potential practical issues of leaving, saying in 2016 that: "The instability we're seeing in England at the moment is only temporary."

In the long run, the British will profit, just like we'd profit from leaving the EU. [...] We'd finally get our national sovereignty back". In the 2018 national election, Italy's hardline Lega party pledged that Italy should pay less to the EU budget and give the Italian constitution precedence over laws written in Brussels.

"If we don't get anything by that point [...] we do not rule out invoking the withdrawal article like Britain did", Claudio Borghi, Lega's head of economic policy said. Similar threats could be found from the far-right in Alternative for Germany (AfD) as late as early 2019.

Since then there's been a notable change of rhetoric. When Salvini's Lega announced a new pan-European alliance and intention to start a European Parliamentary group following May's European elections it included several parties that had previously argued for their respective countries to leave the EU or hold referendums on the question. After the conference, AfD chairman and MEP Jörg Meuthen, said: "We want to reform the European Union and the European Parliament, without destroying them [...] We want to bring radical change".

The shift had begun several months earlier with numerous radical and far-right parties jettisoning this type of withdrawal rhetoric. RN and Wilder's Party for Freedom had both already

backed away from the referendum calls and have adopted a reformist rhetoric. Rassemblement National's last manifesto for example, no longer makes any mention of a referendum on EU membership. Similarly, the Sweden Democrats (SD) who supported a referendum on Sweden's membership changed position last January, arguing for "reform from within". This messaging echoes that of Hungarian President Viktor Orbán who has similarly argued for reform and limits on the powers of the EU without going as far as calling for withdrawal.

Partially bucking this trend is the Forum for Democracy in the Netherlands which became the largest party in the provincial election in March this year and whose leader Thierry Baudet, is one of the most critical voices of the European Union in the country. Baudet has called the EU a "cancer", said he wants to "break it" and expressed support for "Nexit" in both interviews and on Twitter as late as the spring of 2019. Yet even he has softened his rhetoric significantly just weeks ahead of the European Parliament election, saying that "Nexit is irrelevant in this election" and "What matters now is what we will do as long as we are in the EU".

There are of course exceptions. Swedish far-right party Alternative for Sweden (Afs) made "Swexit" the main focus of their campaign ahead of the European Parliament elections, attacking the reformist Sweden Democrats for being too soft on the EU. Unsurprisingly, it didn't do very well as the Swedish population is generally favourable to the EU. Afs received just 0.46% of the votes in the European elections.

### WHAT CHANGED?

Anti-EU ideas are by no means inherently far right. Several left populists have also gone through a process of supporting leaving the EU and then retracting or softening their stance. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the left populist La France

Insoumise has called for France to exit the union if it does not shift to a more social, redistributive, agenda but since changed his rhetoric. It is an indication of a tactical rather than ideological shift.

While the result of the Brexit referendum was celebrated in the European far right at the time, the process of leaving has proved expensive, bureaucratic, protracted and might in practice not come with the return of sovereignty wished for. As such public support for leaving the EU is low making it a weak premise for a campaign.

According to a poll by the European Council on Foreign Relations, two-thirds of EU citizens have positive feelings towards the EU and as many as nine out of 10 said they would be worse off without it. Even in France where RN became the largest party, the majority (62%) have a favourable view of the EU as an institution although somewhat less so of the European Parliament specifically. With the exception of Greece and the UK, the population in all member states is favourable towards the EU according to a poll by Pew Research from March 2019. Favourable opinions themselves does not however mean that there is no significant criticism towards the EU, its policies and the extent of its power over member states. In the previously mentioned Pew poll, a median of 62% say the EU doesn't understand the needs of its citizens. It is perhaps this nuance that populist radical-right and far-right parties mistook for support for leaving the union entirely.

### A EUROPE OF NATIONS

The shift in rhetoric does signify a change of tactic among some far-right parties in Europe but the view that Brussels bureaucrats and liberal EU elites encroach into the domain of sovereign nations has not changed. At the first rally for Salvini's alliance on 18 May in Milan, Salvini let the names Juncker, Macron and Merkel



Matteo Salvini's Lega announced a new pan-European alliance and intention to start a European Parliamentary group following May's European elections



embody this criticism as he argued for a “Common Sense Europe” and for the sovereignty of member states.

However, at the same time, much of the far right seems to have found that Brussels could potentially be a useful forum for the advancement of their ideas, especially on topics such as immigration. A large enough grouping of like-minded peers have helped in creating this possibility. “Five years ago we were isolated,” Marine Le Pen said in Milan, “But today, with our allies, we will finally be in a position to change this Europe”. However, it is not necessarily a requirement. Even a fractured and disunited European Parliament would aid the farright in making the EU less efficient in enforcing its own policies and would limit its possibility to extend its influence further.

It sets the stage for increased cooperation between the European far-right. Even though many parties disagree on more specific issues of migrant redistribution, contribution to the EU budget and sanction towards Russia, they remain broadly united in their opposition to migration and support for nativism. Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán said in January 2019 that “the conventional division of parties into those of the right and of the left will be replaced with a division between those which are pro-immigration and those which are anti-immigration”. This perspective can usefully be used to further unite far-right parties, despite their differences, to this lowest common denominator which we are already seeing examples of in Salvini's new alliance.

What the rhetoric of “sovereignty” means in practice will vary from state to state. However, leaving the EU or working to limit its reach from within (as a united front or a loose alliance) all serves to centralise power in the hands of national leaders. In cases such as Hungary, that is leaders with increasingly authoritarian tendencies. ■



# How identitarian ideology influenced the European elections

From rhetoric to concrete ties, the dangerous identitarian movement has concerning links to the new far-right bloc in the European Parliament. It's time to take a closer look.

By Simon Murdoch



In the lead up to the recent European elections, Germany's Alternative for Germany party (AfD) called for a policy of "remigrating" immigrants, while Heinz-Christian Strache (recently ousted as Austria's Vice-Chancellor after a corruption sting) of the Austrian Freedom Party, told a journalist that his party fought against "population replacement". Jordan Bardella, the lead European Parliamentary candidate for France's Rassemblement National (who is now elected), told an interviewer that his home suburb was witnessing "a substitution of [its] population".

Whilst such policies and statements are concerning enough by themselves,

they also raise important questions about where these politicians acquired these ideas.

In all these cases, they evoke, very explicitly, elements of the 'identitarian' ideology which espouses the view that non-white and, especially, Muslim migrants pose an intrinsic threat to white, non-Muslim Europeans in the form of a "Great Replacement" and that "remigration" is the needed response. The Great Replacement is a conspiracy theory that claims white Europeans are being "replaced" by migrants. Remigration is a policy of repatriating and lowering the standards of living for non-white migrants and Muslims in Europe.

Both ideas are central tenets of

the far-right European identitarian movement which is comprised of a broad network of parties, think-tanks, activist organisations, venues and publications, all espousing similar ideas. At its centre is the pan-European youth movement Generation Identity (GI) that launched in France in 2012.

GI's modus operandi is influencing public debate through media-savvy campaigns and actions, what is known as 'metapolitics'. Identitarian metapolitics focuses on shifting the accepted topics, terms, and positions of public discussion so as to create a social and political environment more open and potentially accepting of its ideology. It comes from a belief that this is required before electoral



and policy support for their views is possible. Indeed, GI will often not focus on campaigning in support of parties, opting instead to try and inject terms like “remigration” into public life.

We have already seen this influence on other far-right actors. Following the Christchurch terror attack in March 2019, many drew attention to the fact that the perpetrator named his manifesto *The Great Replacement*. Moreover, it later came to light that he had been had been in contact with the Austrian branch of GI and had donated sizeable sums to both it and the French branches. More recently, in April, a police raid of a football hooligan network in Cottbus, Germany found GI propaganda alongside nazi material and weapons.

Yet, as is clear from the above statements and policies, GI’s metapolitical push now appears to be reaching parties too. To add to this, concrete ties between the street-based European identitarian movement and radical and far-right political parties have grown in recent years. With the European Parliament in flux as a new far-right bloc emerges led by Matteo Salvini’s Lega party, now more than ever we must pay close attention to what connections exist between the halls of power in Brussels and this dangerous far-right movement.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

An interim report from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) looking at malign influence operations aiming to swing the 2019 European Parliament elections, found signs that the mainstreaming of identitarian ideas was beginning to shift from identitarian activists to sympathetic parties themselves. The ISD noted:

On Twitter there were 20,899 “Remigration” tweets in 2016, a number that rose to 47,353 in 2017 and reached its peak to date with 55,013 tweets in 2018. The Identitarians had almost a monopoly on the top tweets containing the word remigration until the end of 2017. However, from 2018 onwards, the lists of the most shared remigration tweets have included official AfD accounts claiming that Syrian refugees should be deported, and that for “Turks” who “do not want to integrate”, “remigration” might be the best option.

Showing it is coming as much from the base of the party, ISD added that in

a sample of 328 official AfD pages on Facebook, the term remigration “had been used in waves, but increasingly frequently in March [2019], when the term appeared in the AfD’s official election programme”. In France, whilst ISD did not specify whether the boost came in part from the Rassemblement National, it highlighted that in the course of two weeks during the election campaign, “over 1,500 tweets in France contained the hashtag #remigration, potentially reaching over two million users.”

Though further research needs to be done into the mainstreaming of identitarian ideas, language and policies, this research, as well as the examples from parties and politicians themselves mentioned earlier, should give us cause for concern. Not least, because this ‘metapolitical’ approach to slowly influencing politics is a conscious aim for the European identitarian network and, especially, GI. To explore this further, however, we need to also understand the key avenues GI has to use to reach parties more directly.

## GERMANY

Germany’s far-right AfD party has long been the subject of scrutiny over connections to the country’s GI branch.

In 2018 identitarian activist Simon Kaupert – himself formerly working for the AfD – told *The New York Times* at an identitarian event in Germany that, “We have street activists, we have a think tank, we have a publishing house and we have a political party in Parliament,” and claimed there were “dozens” of GI supporters working for the AfD.

At the same event, Franziska Schreiber, a former leading member of the AfD’s youth wing, Junge Alternative (JA), told the reporter that she

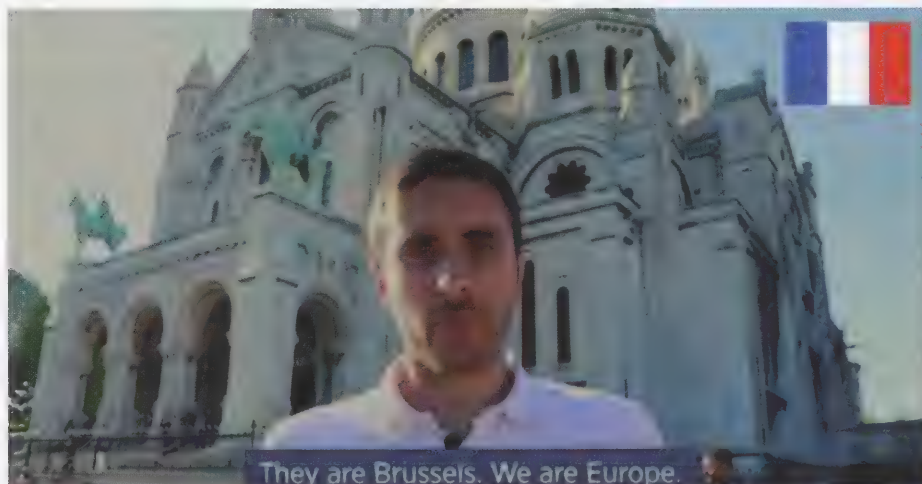
estimates “at least half the members of the AfD’s own youth wing are followers of Generation Identity.” The event itself was held in GI Germany’s headquarters in Halle, a venue which has gained attention for having been the location of the second office of AfD politician, Hans-Thomas Tillschneider. In April 2019, it was revealed that Daniel Fiß, co-leader of the German branch of GI, had been working for AfD MP Siegbert Droese since March 2019.

In 2017, leaks from an internal WhatsApp group for AfD officials and members in Saxony-Anhalt showed they were supportive of GI but knew they must hide this publicly. However, there are recent indications that the party is becoming more relaxed about this, at least when it comes to the broader broader German identitarian network. In May 2019 the party held a conference in the Bundestag to launch its ‘Congress of Free Media’ which aimed to bring together sympathetic “alternative media outlets” with the party’s parliamentary group. Amongst these were the increasingly ignored British far-right social media personality Milo Yiannopoulos, but more importantly GI-sympathetic German vloggers such as Oliver Flesch and Götz Kubitschek, a leading figure in the German ‘New Right’ scene who has multiple connections to the European identitarian movement.

That the AfD should be so welcoming should be no surprise, moreover. Connections between the party and far-right activists are so numerous that in January of this year Germany’s domestic intelligence agency announced it would begin monitoring a faction of the party associated with AfD politician Björn Höcke, the party’s youth-wing, and even consider monitoring the entire party.







A French GI activist in a European election campaign video which featured activists from eight European branches

## FRANCE

The connections between Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN) and the identitarian network are even less surprising than in Germany, given it was France where the ideology originated and was the launchpad of the first identitarian organisations in the early 2000s. Nonetheless, the extent to which identitarianism has rooted itself within the RN is deeply concerning.

Le Pen herself told *The Irish Times* in February 2019 that the RN has welcomed former members of the identitarian movement, and added that she didn't see "what is reprehensible" about French identitarians demonstrating with banners against migrants.

Most damning, however, are the revelations from Al Jazeera's documentary investigation into French identitarians which aired in December 2018. In addition to capturing activists encouraging and engaging in racist and anti-Muslim violence, it revealed extensive links between GI activists and the RN, including that GI activists worked for senior party members. It also showed numerous senior RN figures attending an identitarian bar in Lille and expressing their support for GI, including Nicolas Bay MEP and Christine LeChavalier MEP. LeChevalier said that many other RN members would like to attend, and stated that "Marine [Le Pen] isn't personally against this."

The broader French identitarian network also maintains links to the RN through Marion Marechal Le Pen, Marine Le Pen's niece and a former RN politician. Marion stepped away from electoral politics in 2017 and opened a school in 2018 in Lyon, 'ISSEP', for training future political leaders. Pictures emerged in the same

year of Clément Galant (President of the French GI), and Romain Espino (spokesperson for the French GI) alongside Marion at an event at ISSEP.

More recently, in April 2019, *Le Monde* newspaper reported that she attended the sixth annual conference of the Iliade Institute in Paris, which is tied to the 'Nouvelle Droite' movement that helped develop identitarianism. Espino also spoke and GI was praised by numerous speakers. Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a founding member of the Nouvelle Droite and a co-founder of Iliade, also spoke at the event before heading to a conference held by US white nationalists American Renaissance in May, where members of the UK branch of GI and of the US identitarian group, American Identity Movement, were also in attendance.

## AUSTRIA

The branch of GI in Austria is very active and its co-leader, Martin Sellner, is the de facto spokesperson for the movement in Europe. Sellner and the Austrian GI branch have come under intense scrutiny recently after it was revealed that Sellner had received donations from the Christchurch mosque attacker and had been in contact with him. Given this, the future for the branch is uncertain. However, it is worth noting that, like France and Germany in particular, GI is embedded in a broader identitarian network in the country and the inroads made by this and GI into gaining support from the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) is no less concerning.

In 2018, Austrian intelligence services had reported a list 374 members of GI Austria, including a number of active members of the FPÖ. In April 2019, Austrian human rights organisation, SOS Mittmensch, found at least 48 links and points of contact

between the FPÖ and the identitarian movement, affecting four then FPÖ-led ministries.

Just a month later, the *New York Times* reported concerns from Sybille Geissler, who leads the anti-extremism unit of Austria's domestic intelligence service, that "her biggest challenge these days [...] is that the far right is part of her own government". This followed multiple incidents, including police confiscation of her domestic intelligence files and a colleague's disinvitation from a 2017 European meeting on GI, it appears out of concern by foreign intelligence agencies as to the security of Austria's own.

## ITALY

The Italian GI's connection to the Lega party, led by Matteo Salvini, extends back at least to a February 2015 conference in Rome held by the think-tank, *Il Talebano*. The event featured Salvini, plus (now-) Lega government minister Lorenzo Fontana, unsuccessful European election Lega MEP candidate Vincenzo Sofo (who spoke at the Iliade Institute conference mentioned above and is the fiancé of Marion Marechal Le Pen), Italian GI leader, Lorenzo Fiato, and two core, influential figures in the European identitarian movement, the German Götz Kubitschek mentioned above and Philippe Vardon from France (who is now also a senior Rassemblement National figure).

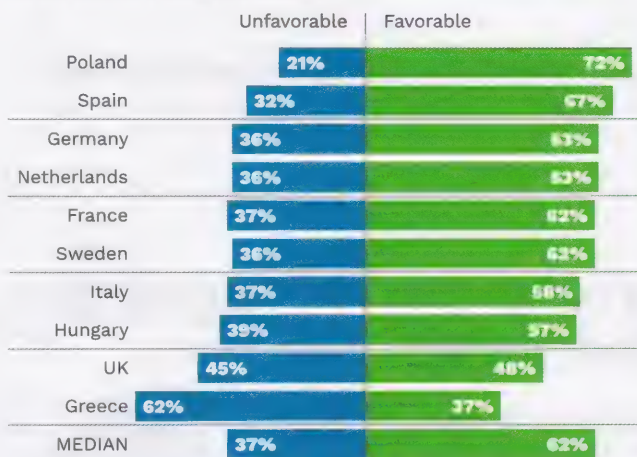
The partnership between Lega and the Italian branch of GI continued with the party's support for the pan-European GI 'Defend Europe' campaign in 2017 which saw GI activists charter a ship to disrupt NGO vessels saving lives in the Mediterranean. Their cooperation saw the party hosting events alongside GI in Italy during the campaign, as a means to raise awareness of it and help grow local branches of GI across the country.

The openness of Lega towards GI activists continued into 2018 with Gian Marco Concas, a founding member of GI Italy and a participant in 'Defend Europe', being welcomed into the European Parliament by standing Lega MEP, Mario Borghezio, to hold a conference on the campaign. More recent collaboration is perhaps not even needed, given that the mainstreaming of the identitarian narrative appears to have worked on Lega for some time. In May 2016 Salvini had already told an interviewer that "An effort at ethnic replacement is underway: well-

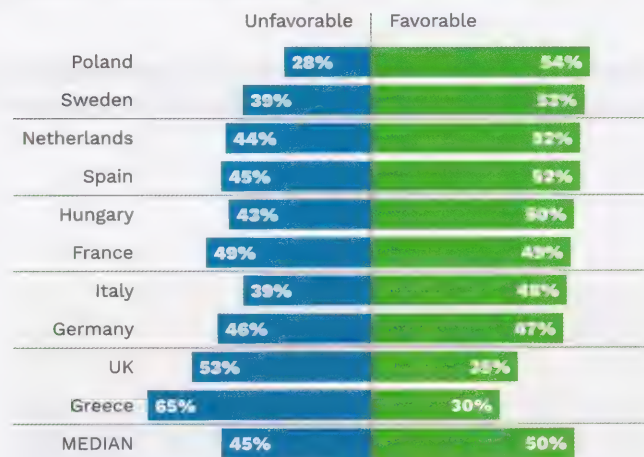


## MAJORITIES FAVORABLE TOWARD EUROPEAN UNION, DIVIDED OVER EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

VIEWS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



VIEWS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. Q17d & h. PEW RESEARCH CENTER



financed organisations are importing thousands of new farm slaves, paid 3 euros an hour, to erase Italians living here. This is a lucrative attempt at genocide.”

More recently, echoing the identitarian fearmongering narrative that Europe is under threat from ‘Islamification’, Salvini told journalists at a press conference in Budapest in May 2019 alongside Viktor Orbán: “For our children, to leave behind an Islamic caliphate with sharia law in our cities is not something I want to do and I’m going to do everything in my power to avert this sad ending for Europe”.

### IT'S TIME TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Whilst GI has received some significant blows recently given its revealed links to the Christchurch mosque attacker, the organisation remains dangerously close to numerous parties which have have greater solidified their place in Brussels following the European elections. Moreover, the wider identitarian network that supports them will no doubt do all they can to keep GI afloat, knowing that the street movement has had successes establishing ties to parties and advancing identitarian ideas into public debate through their metapolitical campaigns.

What’s more, as the AfD’s ‘Congress of Free Media’ and Marion Marechal Le Pen’s attendance at the Iliade Institute conference demonstrate, the distance of these parties to the wider identitarian network itself is closing, ensuring possibly even greater support for GI from the far-right political establishment itself.

Now that the dangerous ideology of identitarianism is under closer scrutiny, it is time we focus greater attention on the network that birthed GI in the first place and continues to support both it and this emergent far-right bloc.



# The view from across Europe

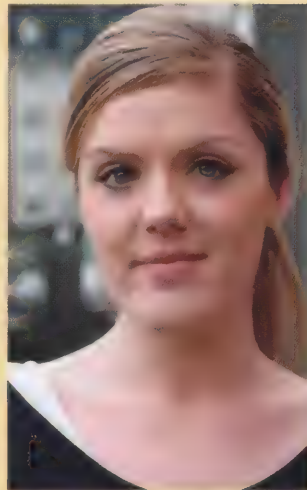
**What could the results be on the ground from these election results? We've asked four commentators from across Europe to share their views.**

## THERE IS CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM

Despite all the challenges facing the European Union, and our newly elected MEPs, I am hopeful that a freer, fairer Europe is in our reach. The European elections last month saw more people come out and vote than had done so in any European election in the last 20 years, and many campaigns were driven by young people who made their voices heard on several key issues.

On 14 May, youth activists supported by Amnesty International staged coordinated actions in more than 35 cities encouraging Europeans to get out and vote. These young people expressed their vision of a Europe that welcomes refugees and migrants, guarantees equal rights for everyone, and prioritises tackling the climate crisis. Their actions show a growing support for human rights and that Europeans want their leaders to ensure these rights are respected across Europe.

Yet in Poland, peaceful protestors are being pursued in court and some judges are being replaced by colleagues who are more supportive of the government's agenda. In Hungary,



the government has taken much of the media under its control and the xenophobic language of hate filled the Prime Minister's stump speech during this election campaign. By creating scapegoats, politicians distract from some of the very real issues facing our continent.

There is cause for optimism though. We know that many of our new MEPs support the founding principles of the European Union of freedom, rule of law, and human rights. I will make it my mission during the coming years to work with them, and with colleagues, activists and partners from different sectors to make this vision a reality.

**Eve Geddie** is director of Amnesty International's European Institutions office

## NO TIME FOR COMPLACENCY OVER RADICAL-RIGHT POPULISTS

The doomsday prediction that radical-right populists would double their seats in last month's European elections did not materialise. In fact, the picture was mixed. But to sit back and celebrate would be premature.

The analysts at the German weekly *Zeit* had it right with their colourful patchwork map analysis, noting that "every political creed is in the majority somewhere." But that conclusion and the fact that the radical-right populists fared less well overall than some feared is no reason for complacency. This election result continues the steady gains radical-right populist parties have made in the European Parliament.

Given how fragmented support for political parties is, these parties in government in some countries – Italy, Poland, Hungary – may well further cement their grasp on power at home. That will enable them to continue to pursue domestically, and to seek to export, rights-abusive policies on migration, civil society, or independent courts. That risks remains even if such policies are ultimately blocked at the EU level.

The steady support for such parties and their anti-human-rights agenda perpetuates the risk that mainstream parties, whether on the left or right, will seek to emulate their platform and rhetoric. While the strategy has



generally failed to deliver a boost at the polls, it has had a corrosive effect on politics, normalising toxic xenophobic, anti-Muslim, antisemitic and anti-Roma rhetoric and legitimising abusive migration policies.

Over the next five years, European Parliament members who care about rights need to stay alert. They will need to build bridges between fragmented political alliances working to detect and resist attempts by radical-right populists to drive down human rights standards. It also means getting their party colleagues at home to resist the temptation to chase votes in domestic elections by mimicking radical-right and far-right populists and undermining support for human rights.

**Kartik Raj** is Western Europe researcher at Human Rights Watch, currently focusing on the implications of populism for human rights in the region.



## GLOOMY TIMES ARE AHEAD IN ITALY

In the aftermath of the European Parliament elections, widespread surprise about the magnitude of Salvini's League results was probably the most common reaction for a number of observers – first and foremost activists and citizens involved in anti-discrimination and anti-racism movements and campaigns.

Less than 10 days have passed since 26 May, but the new balance of power in the Italian government has already been reshuffling the priorities of the executive with regard to the measures included in the "government contract" signed by the Five Stars Movement and the League after the 2018 national elections.

Importantly, a new Security Decree, which Salvini had presented during the election campaign, has reached the top of the government agenda, and will be discussed during the Council of Ministers. The draft version of this new decree includes not only highly restrictive migration-related measures but also provisions that would seriously impinge on Italian citizens' freedom to express their dissent.

To name just a few, the current version includes measures such as the sanctioning of NGOs conducting SAR [search-and-rescue] operations



in the Mediterranean (sanctions would range from €3,500–€5,500 per migrant rescued), the transfer of competences from the Ministry of Infrastructures (a position currently covered by a Five Star Movement representative) to the Ministry of the Interior (Salvini himself) on the capacity to limit and/or forbid the transit of boats on Italian territorial waters, increased protections for law enforcement agents through the introduction of new violations for opposing public officials and changes in the penal code to harden penalties in cases of resistance, threat or violence against public officials.

Gloomy times are ahead of us, but the Italian civil society will not stand still in front of the progressive 'fascistisation' of the political discourse and governmental actions.

**Claudia Marà** is a board member of ENAR and a social policy expert based in Italy.

## URGENT NEED FOR SOLIDARITY ACROSS EUROPE

The results of the EU elections, with far-right and xenophobic parties making progress in many EU member states, highlight the ever more urgent need for a progressive front committed to justice, equality and solidarity.

It is extremely concerning that approximately one fourth of the European Parliament will be made up of parties promoting racist and xenophobic programmes. Nevertheless, they did not do as well as expected, and have suffered losses in several countries. In addition, there have been some wins for progressive parties, showing that there are millions of people in Europe who want equality and social, environmental and economic justice. New members of the European Parliament need to listen to this message and ensure the next Parliament takes on these demands.

Racist and xenophobic parties in the European Parliament could put the safety and rights of people of colour, minorities and migrants in Europe at risk, by adopting or pushing policies that could have a damaging impact for equality. More broadly, the increasing popularity and leverage of these parties at national level means many ethnic minority communities are living with the fear of being racially abused or attacked, and with the reality of racism being normalised and even condoned in certain contexts.

Support for racist and xenophobic parties is an urgent wake-up call for MEPs and EU representatives to step



up their commitment to address structural discrimination and take a strong, public stance to reject racism. Now, more than ever, is the moment to choose unity and solidarity over division and hatred. We need a progressive coalition of MEPs committed to equality and justice in the European Parliament, including by ensuring that progress achieved so far in terms of protecting human rights does not suffer a setback.

In addition, we need to build on the broad, cross-sector mobilisation across environmental, social, trade union and human rights movements, initiated ahead of the EU elections, to engage our communities in a common constructive debate about how to build an inclusive, equal and fair Europe for all. Joining our forces will also be a much-needed safeguard to ensure basic rights and freedoms are not further eroded by a European Parliament with a strong far-right presence.

**Georgina Siklossy** is senior communication & press officer at the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org).

**Read more on the European elections by visiting [www.hopenothate.org.uk](http://www.hopenothate.org.uk)**



Guest column...

# Time for Action: Countering the financing of the extreme right

By Tom Keatinge

UK GOVERNMENT data revealing a near-fivefold increase in those held for far-right terror offences, and murders like those in two Christchurch mosques in New Zealand in March 2019, outside the Finsbury Park Mosque in London by Darren Osborne in June 2017, and of British MP Jo Cox in June 2016, highlight the rising threat posed by the extreme right.

Whilst the immediate triggers for those that move from abusive words to violent actions might be personal and proximate, investigations of these attacks also demonstrate that far from being purely 'domestic' – as long labelled by governments in Westminster and abroad – those that inspire and perpetrate these attacks are increasingly building international networks, networks built on cross-border internet research, social media contacts and finance.

Since the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington DC by Al Qaeda, targeting the financing of terrorists has been a cornerstone of the global counter terrorism response. Political leaders are quick to call on banks to do more to "cut off the financing of terrorists" following attacks such as those in Paris in 2015. Targeting the so-called Islamic State's (also known as ISIS) finance-producing oil refineries and tanker networks in Syria and Iraq was a key element of the international community's response to the expansion

of the terror group.

In addition, multi-lateral organisations such as the United Nations Security Council and the Financial Action Task Force (the global standard setter for counter-terrorist financing) pass resolutions and assess the efforts of nations to build the necessary institutions and government capabilities to identify, disrupt and prosecute terrorist financiers.

Yet this architecture is narrowly focused. Built as part of President George W. Bush's post-9/11 'War on Terror', it continues to be singularly targeted at Islamist terror. To-date, financing of right-wing terror or extremism has failed to register with security authorities, perhaps because it has, until very recently, been viewed as merely a domestic threat, with little international connectivity; or perhaps because the funding of extremism – as distinct from terrorism – is not itself a crime despite the role it might play in inspiring violent attacks.

This approach needs to change urgently. Whilst attacks with knives or hire cars are cheap to conduct, the organising and promoting of rallies, the development of networks to distribute promotional material and the establishment of extremist-sponsoring media channels all require investment and, critically, the use of financial services.

In a recent article for the Royal United Services

Institute (RUSI) with colleagues Kayla Izenman and Florence Keen, we assessed the sources of right-wing extremist and terrorist funding and what can and is being done to address this financial support.

Three channels for action exist. Firstly, states need to broaden the aperture through which they view terrorist financing. Funding of proscribed right-wing groups such as National Action should be targeted and prosecuted with as much energy as the authorities target those funding Al Qaeda or ISIS. The addition of the extreme right threat to the mandate of the UK's security service, MI5, is a welcome start, but more must be done to understand the funding sources of this threat. While the funding of non-violent extremism is not criminalised in the UK, just as David Cameron committed in December 2015 to "establish a comprehensive review to root out any remaining funding of [Islamist] extremism within the UK", so too should the government undertake a similar review of right-wing extremist funding.

Secondly, awareness must be raised among those that provide financial services to extreme-right actors and cheerleaders and the websites and platforms they use to fund and

promote their hate. These companies consider users in light of their 'terms of service' that reflect legal and reputational issues when determining whom they serve. Companies such as PayPal and virtual currency exchange Coinbase have chosen to remove services from 'Tommy Robinson' (Stephen Lennon) and the website The Daily Stormer, for example. Others, when fully informed, will surely follow suit. Such action demonstrates the useful financial choke point that private sector companies can provide against right-wing extremist financing.

And finally, governments and financial institutions must work closely together to gain a better understanding of how financing (in particular, cross-border funding) is supporting and fuelling right-wing extremism. The evidence is there, it has just not been acted upon thus far.

Too often, targeting the financing of threats is an after-thought. It was not until the dust cleared after the 9/11 attacks that the importance of cross-border financing revealed itself. As governments, societies and the private sector wake up to the mounting dangers posed by the extreme right, it is time to take action against the funding that is fundamental to the propagation of this threat. ■

**Tom Keatinge** is the Director of the Centre for Financial Crime and Security Studies at RUSI.



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